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THE CORNHILL



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EDITED BY PETER QUENNELL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

*As virtuous men passe mildly away,
And whisper to their soules, to goe*

—the departing editor (in spite of some recent and obstreperous examples of the contrary practice) may do well to confine himself to the simplest form of valediction. Indeed, there is little to say, except that after more than seven years—since the magazine was re-launched in January 1944—I am reluctantly giving up my editorship of the CORNHILL. It has been an enjoyable, even an enviable, position ; for, though material conditions have not improved as rapidly as at first we hoped, thanks to our diligent contributors and our faithful readers we have been able to hold our own, and have maintained (we think) and possibly raised our original literary standard. Rival publications have declined and disappeared ; but the proprietors of the CORNHILL still believe that a need exists for the intelligent non-partisan quarterly or monthly paper, prepared to print essays and stories that merit leisurely reading. In the past it has been our policy to favour neither young nor old, and to accept, irrespective of the author's name, only such contributions as seemed to us to possess some real and lasting value. That policy will be followed by the colleagues who succeed me. They have my congratulations and good wishes in their difficult but absorbing task.

PETER QUENNELL.

[*The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope. Subscriptions for the CORNHILL are available from any bookseller or from 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1. A subscription for 4 issues costs 10s. 8d. and for 8 issues 21s. 4d., including postage. At present the CORNHILL appears quarterly.]*

Miss Barrett and Mr. Hunter

BY BETTY MILLER

'**N**EITHER now nor formerly' wrote Elizabeth Barrett to Robert Browning, 'has any man been to my feelings what you are . . .' Nevertheless, from the day the poet was first admitted to her sofa-side, he displaced there a man who had every reason to regard him not only as a rival but as a usurper. Having in this sense preceded Browning for a good many years, it must have been peculiarly galling to find himself, as he did one afternoon, following the poet up the stairs of Wimpole Street ; and with no other prospect than to await in the drawing-room below the termination of so unwelcome a visit. Despite his suspicions, at that time 'he knew nothing for a certainty' : nevertheless, he was 'white with passion' at the humiliation endured ; and perceiving this, poor Wilson 'in fear trembled so that she could hardly open the door.' An hour and a half later, blithely unaware of the resentment incubated on the floor below, Browning took his departure. Barely had the front door closed behind him before the door of Elizabeth's room was wrenched open. There was an unprecedented 'explosion of anger'—('Before a servant too !')—and Elizabeth had coldly to tell her friend 'that if he chose to make himself the bane and jest of the whole house, he was the master, but that I should insist upon his not involving my name in the discussion of his violences.'

Later that evening, talking over the whole episode with Miss Barrett, Wilson suggested, very reasonably, that Mr. Browning might well have mistaken so irascible a gentleman for Mr. Moulton-Barrett himself. 'No,' Elizabeth hastened to assure Robert next day, 'it was neither father nor other relative of mine, but an old friend in rather an ill temper. . . . An old, old friend, too !—known as a friend these twelve or thirteen years !' Twelve or thirteen years from the date of that letter, Edward Moulton-Barrett was living with his family in Sidmouth : and it was beneath the mellow airs of that little seaside town that there had germinated between his eldest daughter and the minister of the chapel at which

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she worshipped the early shoots of a friendship 'proved,' as she was subsequently to write to him, 'for life and death.'

If it can be said that the three years passed at Sidmouth were amongst the happiest in Elizabeth's life, an explanation is to be sought in the personality of the Reverend George Barrett Hunter, whose presence remained a constant factor beneath the variegated surface of what was to take on, under the procrastination of Mr. Barrett, the quality of an *al fresco* existence, a poetic improvisation, a prolonged holiday by the sea. This marine interlude was the outcome of a painful and ironic situation at Hope End, in which not moral corruption from without, but financial weakness within laid open that once impregnable fortress to the importunity of all. Mortgaged, house and estate were put up for sale : and on the pretence of buying, sightseers crowded in from every side. We had to hide, Elizabeth wrote, 'even away from our own private rooms, where we used to be safe from all the world—and to hear in our hiding-places the trampling, the voices of strangers through the passages everywhere, and in the chambers which had been shut for years from our own steps, sacred to death and love.'¹ A few months later, and the familiar components of Hope End were dismantled before their eyes : tables and chairs going by the cartload into a local warehouse ; and the plate to the strong-room of a bank in London. The day arrived finally, a hot morning in August, 1832, in which 'we were,' as Elizabeth then saw it, 'thrust out of our Paradise in Herefordshire.'¹ In two carriages, the Moulton-Barrett sons and daughters passed for the last time through the gates of Hope End : and, 'the pain of that first hour of our journey' somehow surmounted, resolutely, the separate members of the family turned their faces towards the new life awaiting them in a furnished house at Fortfield Terrace, in Sidmouth.

'Before the first day's journey was at an end,' Elizabeth wrote, 'we felt inexplicably relieved—relieved from the restlessness and anxiety which have so long oppressed us' ; and despite the reduced dimensions of this new home ('we are all,' wrote Arabel, 'squeezed in little rooms, two in a bed')² Elizabeth found it possible to sleep that night 'more soundly than I had done for some time.' For with the chairs and books and tables of Hope End, there had also gone into the storehouse at Ledbury, many of the passions and

¹ Letters to Miss Mitford, December 6, 1842 : July 4, 1842 : Wellesley College Library.

² Note to H. S. Boyd : *Ibid.*

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fantasies of her early years. And now, looking out on myrtles and verbena three feet high in the garden, breathing everywhere in the unpretentious house a new air, lightened of old associations and memories, she was able to foresee that the change which she had so much dreaded was on the contrary about to 'do me a great deal of good in every way.'

Of the justice of that forecast, we may judge from one fact alone. From the day of her arrival at Sidmouth, no more solitary meals were served up to Elizabeth in her bedroom : for the first time, the whole family, from the head of the house down to seven-year-old Occy, breakfasted and dined at the same table. Out of doors, too, Elizabeth—animated by the same unaccountable 'good spirits' evident in her father—was ready to take a share in all the family activities : riding her donkey into the sea at the water's edge ; boating and picknicking in the bay ; climbing to the cliff's top to see the view spread out beneath her. She was able, indeed, to forgo at that time all the priorities of Hope End : there was an epidemic of Cholera in the town : she did not catch it : Henrietta, Arabel, Alfred and 'three or four of the other boys' went down with influenza : triumphantly, Ba remained immune from all infection. 'I don't know when I have been so long well as I have been lately ; without a cough or anything else disagreeable,' she wrote, nine months after her arrival in Sidmouth.

At the time that letter was written, 'dear Mr. Hunter,' as Elizabeth already called him, had become as familiar a figure in the drawing-room of Fortfield Terrace as he was in the pulpit of the Marsh Independent Chapel, Eastern Town. A man of wide attainments and of peculiar temperament, he was able to claim at more than one level the interest if not the sympathy of his congregation. He was an orator of power—his 'talent for anger' seen at its best when directed, as it frequently was, against the abuses and privileges of society. Sunday after Sunday Elizabeth Barrett sat with her family ; watching the recurrence of his gestures ; listening to the emphatic intonations of his voice.

I saw you burning, beaming :—
With loquent lightnings, fencing in
Earth's crime, for Heaven's redeeming—¹

she later wrote to him : and there was more than one occasion when

¹ 'To my friend the Rev. G. B. H., with my poems omitting his name.' Hitherto Unpublished Poems. Bibliophile Society, Boston.

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this eloquence fired her so much that on her return to Fortfield Terrace she sat down and copied into the pages of a purple morocco-leather note-book the words resounding, still, in her ears. It was under an inspiration of this nature, if not, indeed, at his direct suggestion, that she wrote her four hymns, *A Supplication for Love*; *The Mediator*; *The Weeping Saviour*; and *The Measure*: the first of which bears as its text a quotation from the 'Recalled words of an extempore Discourse, preached at Sidmouth, 1833.'¹ So effective was the power of his oratory, that when, in the Michaelmas of 1834¹ he resigned from Marsh Chapel in order to preach at various other Chapels in the neighbourhood, she was ready to follow him from pulpit to pulpit; hearing him once 'at the Baptist Chapel, Exeter, before a congregation of a thousand persons':² and accompanying him on another occasion to a Bible meeting at Exmouth, whence, as she wrote with a certain perceptible satisfaction, 'we did not return until half past one in the morning . . .'

Intermittently, then, across the bright seascape of the life at Sidmouth, Mr. Hunter passes and re-passes before our eyes; a dark-hued figure, accompanied often by a small child who clings to his hand and looks up, half timidly, into his face. For Mr. Hunter was a widower; with a daughter, Mary, only six years old. Elizabeth Barrett, whose tenderness for young children is everywhere manifest, has left us in her poem *The Little Friend* a glimpse of the child 'So wild to tame,—to move so soft,' whose face lit to a 'brighter blush' at the sound of 'a father's name,' and darkened at every shadow that 'on his face could fall.' It was not long before father and daughter were in daily communication with the Barrett household, where Mary became a pet, a protégée of the three sisters, who took it in turn to teach her her lessons; and Mr. Hunter—for the head of the house was often away from home—presided with equal impartiality over the shrimping of the younger boys and the trout-fishing of the older ones. There was also an occasion when the whole family went by the steam packet to Torquay, and, 'a most devastating sea-sickness' overtaking the passengers, 'Mr. Hunter and I,' wrote Elizabeth, 'had to nurse all our party.'³ Her brother Edward was not of that party: in the late summer, Mr.

¹ Minute Book of Marsh Independent Chapel, Eastern Town, Sidmouth, 1833-4.

² Twenty Unpublished Letters of Elizabeth Barrett to Hugh Stuart Boyd. Huntington Library, California. Edited by Bennett Weaver. Publication of the Modern Language Association of America. Vol. LXV, No. 4. June, 1950.

³ Letter to H. S. Boyd, May 30, 1834: Wellesley College Library.

Barrett had despatched him to Jamaica to look after the family interests there : he remained abroad until the spring of 1835, returning just as the household was about to transfer itself bodily from Sidmouth to London. It is to this prolonged absence of Edward's that we may attribute much of the serenity and well-being of Elizabeth's years in Sidmouth. (Was it before or after his departure that in a dream she saw her brother pour oil of vitriol on three serpents that, ' Besprent with noisome poison slime,' ' inward and outward wound,' waxing ' longer still and longer '?)¹ It is to Edward's absence, in any case, that we may attribute his sister's ability to enter into an emotional relationship with a newcomer ; for there can be little doubt that Mr. Hunter was the main pivot of Elizabeth's thoughts and activities during the halycon days, never to be repeated or equalled, of the family's stay at Sidmouth. Beneath the ' green rows of elms which wall in the secluded lanes on every side ' they would walk and talk together ; or they would climb to ' the solitude of one dear seat ' overlooking the sea—' too far or too lonely ' for many others to like besides themselves—and listening within the shelter of their ' grassy niche ' to ' the grave Lamenting of the underwave,' meditate in silence on ' That deathly odour which the clay Leaves on its deathlessness alway.' Years later, Elizabeth was to speak with nostalgia of those ' country-walks Enshrining kindly speeches ' ; of ' our Sidmouth talks Beneath the elms and beeches ' ; and many of her poems written at the time not only carry the visible imprint of their relationship, but were designed by her for the especial pleasure and approbation of the man who called himself her devoted friend. The poems were later given to the public : Mr. Hunter, however, did not relinquish his original claim upon them. They are '*Mine*' he wrote emphatically, ' because you taught me to call them so.'²

A note, possessive and faintly truculent, emerges from the words. The situation of George Barrett Hunter was not an enviable one. There is no doubt that he was deeply and painfully in love with Elizabeth Barrett. But the peculiarities of his position—not to mention those of Mr. Barrett's—made it impossible for him to think of a second marriage. Without means of his own, he was dependent

¹ *A True Dream. Dreamed at Sidmouth, 1833.* A poem withheld from her collected works. Printed in the CORNHILL MAGAZINE, July, 1914.

² Letter addressed to ' Dearest and ever dearer Friend ' : signed G. B. H. : September 26, 1838. University of Illinois Library.

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wholly on his salary as a minister ; which he endeavoured, with very little success, to supplement by taking private pupils. (In September, 1834, we find Elizabeth seeking amongst her friends a son or brother in need both of sea air and of private tuition.) He was at once morbidly and ironically alert to the contrast between his own near-poverty and the security and wealth of the family who befriended him. At the same time, through a certain flaccidity—perversity, even—of temperament, he continued to obstruct, passively but persistently, the promotion of his own interest. Even his attachment to Elizabeth, enduring as it was to be, afforded him in all as much pain as pleasure, since ‘a sensibility which strikes inwards and outwards’ was ready to discern at every other word material for self-laceration. ‘Think of a sort of dumb Rousseau,’ Elizabeth wrote of him ‘—with the “Confessions” in him, pining evermore to get out !’ Nevertheless, although she was to find herself at times the victim rather than the object of this sensibility, Elizabeth perceived all the qualities of a ‘fine nature’ beneath what had later become ‘the ruins of the will’ : and those qualities, in the Sidmouth years, at least, outweighed for her the imperfections of which they were necessarily a part.

How deeply, all the while, she had leaned upon the foundations of this friendship, became evident at once when in the summer of 1835 Mr. Barrett transferred his family from Sidmouth to a furnished house in Gloucester Place, near Baker Street. It was with the utmost reluctance that Elizabeth surrendered the associations of a place where she had known so much happiness. ‘Half my soul,’ she wrote, ‘seems to have stayed behind on the sea-shore’ : (a division that was not healed, as we shall see, until at Dr. Chamber’s orders she was sent back once more to the shores of Devonshire). They found London ‘wrapped up like a mummy, in a yellow mist’ : however, wrote Elizabeth grimly, ‘I daresay I shall soon be able to see in my dungeon, and begin to be amused with the spiders.’ She was profoundly unhappy. ‘Was there anybody in the world who ever loved London for itself? . . . I doubt that . . . the place and the privileges of it don’t mix together in one’s love, as is done among the hills and by the seaside.’ And amid the indifferent voice of the city’s traffic—

The cabman’s cry to get out of the way ;
The dustman’s call down the area-grate ;

—ceaselessly, unavailingly, she craved the ‘known faces and

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listened-to voices' of the happy days at Sidmouth. The poetry written within the 'sunless walls' of Gloucester Place is full of nostalgia for 'My seaward hill, my boundless sea.'

I am gone from peopled town !
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound,
For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have—
O'er a hundred valleys deep
Where the hill's green shadows sleep
Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images,
O'er a hundred hills each other
Watching to the western wave,
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

'The silent, lone, remembered ground' was the area dedicated to her companionship with George Hunter : it was the seat 'Hollowed in a seaside hill' upon which so often, in the days 'to which is no returning' they had sustained in silence the communion of their thoughts. Now, otherwise silenced, she could only communicate with him through the post : and if during the early years in London the sum of her correspondence is comparatively meagre, it was because the fullness of her feelings was reserved for a man who took good care, subsequently, that no word of hers should reach that greater public whose attentions he had so much reason to resent. In 1913, however, there was found amongst her papers a copy of a poem written at Gloucester Place. Of this poem, *Epistle to a Canary*, Edmund Gosse was incautiously to write in the CORNHILL MAGAZINE that 'it is not difficult to reconstruct its history with some exactness. There can be no doubt that it was addressed to Mary Russell Mitford's pet canary . . .' But Edmund Gosse underestimated the good sense of Elizabeth Barrett ; and the *Epistle To A Canary* is addressed, not to a woman in her fifties, but to a child of ten. The 'Mary' of that poem is not, in fact, Miss Mitford, but Mary Elizabeth Hunter, who, living now with her father at Axminster, had written to tell 'Carissima Ba' of the doings of her pet canary. It was in return for her letter that she received this playful poem ; in which, less playfully, Elizabeth identifies herself with the fate of a pair of Barbary doves 'ta'en away,' as she elsewhere wrote, 'From that glad nest of theirs. . . . And now,

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within the city prison, In mist and chillness pent' ; caged birds,
condemned like their owner,

To be for aye expatriated,
To sit at London windows, viewing,
For fair green hills, the human ruin,
Hearing, for river-songs, wind-catches,—
'Old clothes, old clothes,' and 'Buy my matches,' . . .

Industriously, meanwhile, Mr. Moulton-Barrett was pursuing from street to street 'his eternal hunt for houses.' The 'wild huntsman in the ballad is nothing to him' wrote his daughter, who feared, uneasily, that the possibility 'of being bricked up for a lease time may not be very agreeable.' She did not want the family to settle in London : above all, she did not want to live in 'that particular house' in Wimpole Street—'whose walls look so much like Newgate's turned inside out.' 'It is a thousand to one,' she wrote, 'but that the feeling of four red London walls closing round us for seven, eleven or twenty-five years, would be a harsh and hard one, and make us cry wistfully to "get out".' Crying, however wistful, was of no avail. The lease was duly signed : crate by crate the furniture of Hope End began to arrive in London. But by the time that the tables and chairs of a former existence were carried over the threshold of number 50 Wimpole Street, Elizabeth Barrett had succumbed to so serious and disabling an illness, that Edward had to 'fold her in a cloak and carry her to the new house in his arms.' And when at length she was ready to greet in their new surroundings the bed, the table, the armchair that had attended her long illness at Hope End, it was with the mien and gestures of the invalid that she resumed amongst them a manner of life suspended, successfully, since 1832. 'I believe I shall . . . be as sedentary as ever I was in my old armchair,' she wrote ; and it was in fact from this armchair—'given to me when I was a child by my uncle'—if not from 'my old place on the sofa,' that she continued for the next few months to write to her friends of leeches and of blisters ; of digitalis and of laudanum : of the visits of Dr. Chambers, and of the verdict of his stethoscope. 'There is not, however, much strength or much health, nor any near prospect of regaining either,' she wrote ; a wistful prisoner within the Newgate-like walls of Wimpole Street. To regain either her health or her liberty, she must return to the conditions, if not to the place in which she had once found both.

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Dr. Chambers was ready to urge the advisability of releasing so susceptible a patient from the rigours of a London winter. Mr. Moulton-Barrett, however, resisted blankly the suggestion that his daughter should migrate to Pisa or to Torquay. Where Elizabeth, it seems, was grateful to the curly-headed Dr. Chambers for 'a feeling and a sympathy which are certainly rare in . . . his profession,' Mr. Moulton-Barrett suspected irritably that the true rôle of the fashionable physician was to 'reconcile foolish women to their follies.' A deadlock ensued in which Elizabeth discovered the vanity of opposing her own will to that of her father. It was the acquiescent daughter, then, who wrote to Mr. Boyd in reply to an enquiry about her health, that I 'am said to look better.' At the same time, she added significantly, 'I am aware of being always on the verge of an increase of illness': and she concluded an account of her own 'very precarious state' by begging him earnestly not to 'leave this note about,' as she was 'anxious not to alarm . . . any one of my family.' The family, naturally enough, became sufficiently alarmed to bring a certain concerted pressure to bear on the head of the house: and the upshot of the matter was, as Elizabeth once more wrote to Mr. Boyd, that 'we sail at eight in the morning to Plymouth, or rather Devonport, and shall not reach it until Monday night. Afterwards, we avail ourselves of the earliest Torquay packet.'¹ But her joy in rediscovering the familiar coastline was darkened already by apprehension: she had returned to Devonshire, she knew, 'against the bias' of her father's wish; and the autumnal gloom of her arrival at Torquay 'struck to my heart strangely. As (I thought at the time) as if I felt grief in the air.'² Despite her pleasure in a spot which Tennyson once called 'the loveliest sea village in England,' the apprehension remained: so much so, that George Hunter—bewailing, as always, his own desolation 'since my Guardian Angel left me'—found it necessary to exhort her not to 'give way to anxieties and regrets about leaving your beloved ones in London.'³ Torn, equally, between her desire to remain, and the necessity to return, Elizabeth was to alternate for the next three years between illness and health; until, violently, the tragedy of July 11th, 1840, tipped the balance to one side. The death of Edward rendered the sunlight of Torquay intolerable to her: every breath she drew there suffocated her—wrote the author

¹ Letter to H. S. Boyd, dated 'Friday.' Huntington Library.

² Letter to Miss Mitford, November 14, 1843. Wellesley College Library.

³ Illinois University Library, September 26, 1838.

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of *The Tempest*—like ‘the air of a thunderstorm.’ As vehemently as she had once yearned to be released from the prison of Wimpole Street, so she strove now to return there; attempting, in the total surrender of her own will, to escape ‘from the sense of doing evil where I would soonest bring a blessing.’ And in an agony of remorse—as one who had ‘wept tears of blood for going’—she made a vow. ‘I never will leave my family for health’s sake any more.’¹

* * *

In May, 1844, a year, precisely, before Robert Browning’s first visit to Wimpole Street, the Reverend George Barrett Hunter placed his daughter in a boarding school at Brighton, and came to live in London. He took lodgings in Brixton, where he gave four lessons a week to a private pupil: and since the sum realised by these efforts did not exceed a hundred guineas a year, his assets, in comparison with the financial status of the Barrett family, may be said to have been as insignificant as those of Robert Browning himself. The removal to town, however, permitted a resumption of intimacy with his former friends: and it was not long before he was knocking firmly on the door of number 50 Wimpole Street. A new face greeted him there: for Crow, Elizabeth’s competent and energetic maid, had recently left her service in circumstances of some secrecy. Aware, it seems, of the prevailing inhibition (and originating, incidentally, a fashion that was later to become *de rigueur* in Wimpole Street) Crow had eloped with the family butler: retiring subsequently to open with him a baker’s shop in Camden Town. Her successor was a quietly-spoken young woman named Wilson. Elizabeth found Wilson ‘very anxious . . . almost too anxious . . . very gentle, . . . almost too gentle’²; her most conspicuous fault, a diffidence which imposed on her mistress ‘a liberty I am not grown strong enough for.’ In the months that followed, Wilson was to become as familiar with the features and mannerisms of Mr. Hunter as she was soon to be with those of Mr. Browning: for it was immediately after her own arrival in Wimpole Street that Mr. Hunter’s ‘usual Saturday’s visit’ became an event accepted without question by every member of the household.

Those weekly visits, however, were no longer a source of unmitigated pleasure to Elizabeth. For the ‘pure principle of

¹ Letters to Miss Mitford, July 26, 1842. Wellesley College Library.

² *Ibid.*, May 7, 1844.

adoration' which George Hunter professed for his 'angel of Heaven,' was apt, increasingly, to manifest itself in a querulous and carping resentment of her every activity. Two years before, when she had published in the *Athenaeum* her essay on *The Greek Christian Poets*, Mr. Hunter, the critic, saw fit to disassociate himself, scornfully, from the eulogies of 'Mr. Browning, the poet'; putting it forward as his own opinion that the essay was not written 'with either sufficient seriousness or diffidence, and that there [was] a painful sense of effort through the whole.' For already, an over-alert sensibility questioned not only the avowed 'fellow-feeling' of Elizabeth Barrett for this much-misunderstood poet, but the practise of poetry itself, which permitted so undesirable an intimacy to flourish, as Mr. Hunter felt that it did, at the expense of his own peace of mind. He was all the more dismayed, therefore, to discover upon his arrival in London how stubbornly enracinated, in his friend, was the source of the artistic impulse. For Elizabeth Barrett was absorbed just then in preparing for Moxon and the press the important two-volume edition of her new poems. Succumbing to the 'will to be written' of those poems, she sat day after day 'in a glow of pleasure and impulse,' altering and enlarging; transposing and composing. 'All the life and strength which are in me, seem to have passed into my poetry,' she wrote; and to the truth of that statement Mr. Hunter was bitterly enough to testify; sensing, in his turn, so many familiar currents of warmth and sympathy ebb, chillingly, from the substance of their friendship. Almost as hard to bear, he found, were the after-effects of publication: the importunity of strangers, which threatened a solitude within the confines of which it had been his privilege, hitherto, to know himself the sole male visitor. (Mr. Kenyon, after all, was merely a relative.) 'Ever since my last book has brought me a little more before the public, I can do or say, or wish to do and say, nothing right with him,' Elizabeth wrote. 'Every new review he sees, there is a burst of indignation. . . .'¹ The words were written on a Wednesday in February, 1845; and it is possible, therefore, to suggest that it was not the reviews alone which provoked these outbursts of indignation, but the letters of Robert Browning, which were already then arriving in steady procession at number 50 Wimpole Street. It was, perhaps, upon discovering yet again the familiar New Cross postmark on an envelope, that Mr. Hunter was impelled to talk 'gravely and bitterly' of 'the sin and shame of

¹ Letter to Miss Mitford. Wellesley College Library.

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those divine angels, called women, daring to tread in the dust of a multitude' :¹ and when, a few months later, the letters gave place to visits, and the visits, for all his pleading, became as regular and as frequent as his own, the minister was reduced to writing letters, in his turn, in which he upbraided his 'Guardian Angel' for being "unbending," . . . "disdainful," . . . "cold-hearted," . . . "arrogant, as women always are when men grow humble". This last letter was received by Elizabeth on July 17th; and recognising in it 'the very flower of self-love self-tormented into ill-temper,' she wisely allowed it to remain unanswered: one result of her silence being—as we see in her letter of the same date to H. S. Boyd—that on the following Saturday, July 21st, Mr. Hunter omitted to pay his usual visit to the sick-room in Wimpole Street.

For a whole year, Robert Browning came and went between New Cross and Wimpole Street without suspecting that he was shadowed by a concealed enmity: that a man whose face remained invisible to him, watched in steadily mounting resentment the repetition of his visits. The brunt of that resentment was borne by Elizabeth Barrett; who continued nevertheless to conceal from Robert not only the history of her early relationship with George Hunter, but the stress to which she was, on his account, periodically subjected. This stress was so great that she was compelled to ask her sister Arabel to remain in the room with her when Mr. Hunter was expected—"otherwise I am afraid—he is such a violent man." It was not until August 9th, 1846, when, once again, Robert's Saturday visit had coincided with or displaced that of Mr. Hunter, that she was constrained to afford him, in explanation, a glimpse of this peculiar devotion which had ante-dated his own. Even then, her reticence was such that she continued to withhold from her lover the identity of her troublesome friend. Robert Browning, however, put two and two together. Shrewdly, 'Can this person be the "old friend in an ill humour" who followed me upstairs one day?' he asked: and he added hastily, 'I trust to you—that is the end of all.' What he did not trust, however, was her ability to defend herself from further annoyance. '"Insolent letters" you ought to put up with from no one—and as there is no need of concealment of my position now, I think you will see a point where I may interfere. Always rely on my being *quietly* firm, and never violent nor exasperating: you alluded to some things which I cannot let my fancy stop on. Remember you are mine, now—my own, my very own. . . .

¹ Letter to Miss Mitford. Wellesley College Library.

I have too strong a belief that the man who would *bully* you, would drop into a fit at the sight of a man's uplifted little finger.' But Elizabeth shrank back from the thought of such an intervention—'One may get angry, frightened, disgusted—but after all, compassion comes in :—and who would think of fighting a delirious man with a sword? It would be a cruelty, like murder.' She preferred to endure in silence the tears and even the taunts of George Hunter ; taunts which took the form, now, of scathing references to the appearance and personality of her 'New Cross Knight.'

The poet, naturally enough, was disquieted at the prolongation of this state of affairs : and it was no doubt under his influence that Elizabeth consented, finally, to put an end to the whole situation by informing Mr. Hunter (whose integrity, it seems, she had no reason to suspect) that it was her intention to marry Robert Browning at the earliest opportunity. George Hunter was silenced at once : and a few weeks later, after thirteen years of stormy and embittered passion, he wrote to his guardian angel to beg the favour of 'a last interview,' which, he humbly assured her, would be pacific enough to fulfil all her requirements. For the first time a note of asperity, of hardness even, is to be detected in Elizabeth's voice. 'Oh—such stuff!' she wrote to Robert. 'Am I to hold a handkerchief to my eyes and sob a little? . . . And I forgot to tell you that there were *two* things in which I had shown great want of feeling—one, the venturing to enclose your verses—the other . . (now listen !) the other . . the having said that "I was sincerely sorry for all his real troubles." Which I do remember having said once, when I was out of patience—as how can any one be patient continually? and how was I especially to condole with him in lawn and weepers, on the dreadful fact of your existence in the world? Well—he has real troubles unfortunately and he is going away to live in a village somewhere. Poor Chiappino! . . .'

Poor Chiappino. . . . A few months earlier, Elizabeth Barrett had read for the first time the manuscript of Browning's poem, *A Soul's Tragedy*. In the character of Chiappino, she recognised at once the prototype of George Barrett Hunter. 'Do you know,' she wrote to Robert, 'that, as far as the *temper* of the man goes, I am acquainted with a Chiappino . . just such a man, in the temper, the pride and the bitterness . . . My Chiappino has tired me out at last—I have borne more from him than women ought to bear from men, because he was unfortunate and embittered in his

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nature and by circumstances, and because I regarded him as a friend of many years' . . . The Chiappino of *A Soul's Tragedy*—‘homeless friendless penniless’—is endowed not only with the same dour characteristics as George Hunter, but also with the same power of oratory.

All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit ;
See how your words come from you in a crowd !

For years, nevertheless, this Chiappino has loved in silence, only to see the woman of his choice succumb to the ‘mincing speech’ of his rival ; the pacific and ‘happy-tempered’ Luitolfo, in whose qualities, if not his fortunes, he sees the reverse of his own.

I was born here, so was Luitolfo ; both
At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth ; and both, up to this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.

It was Robert Browning who stood in the sunshine of Elizabeth Barrett’s favour : George Hunter in the shadow ; and from that shadow he had watched for two years the ‘prosperous smooth lover,’ his rival, ‘compose the tie That pulls you from me.’ Now the rivalry was at an end. His chief hope defeated, Mr. Hunter was ‘going away to live in a village somewhere.’ He took his departure, but not without a final, a Chiappino-like gesture of pride and bitterness. ‘So be it ! You flourish, I decay : all’s well.’

Wine the Mocker

BY MARGARET LANE

'It isn't as if,' said Mrs. Castlemay, 'the girl were plain. She's got quite as good a face as either of our girls, and there's nothing much the matter with her figure.'

'There's nothing the matter with it,' said the general, after a reflective pause.

'She's stiff, but that's a part of her whole attitude. There's nothing wrong with her, physically.'

The general raised his eyebrows briefly, then let his attention wander. They were sitting out on the terrace at breakfast, in comfortable wicker chairs, in a broad margin of shade. It would be hot later. From where he sat the general could see down a flight of stone steps, across several descending levels of lawn and topiary, to the lake, where he could discern his black Australian swans among the lilies.

'I sometimes wonder if hypnotism would be any good,' said his wife, absently feeling the coffee-pot with her hand. 'I believe there are reputable doctors. Not in Ireland, of course. It would mean taking her to London. Or perhaps New York?' She gazed into the distance. 'I should enjoy that with anyone else, but it got me down last time I had to drag her even to Dublin.'

She glanced with a slightly guilty expression at the first-floor windows. She was a kindly woman and conscientious, and never denied the financial advantages she enjoyed as the girl's guardian. Until Agatha was twenty-one a good proportion of her preposterous fortune was to be spent on running a home in a suitable manner ; and since that home, ever since Agatha was nine, had been Mrs. Castlemay's, the place had improved. This made Mrs. Castlemay uneasy whenever she criticised the girl ; that, and the fact that there was nothing of an ordinary kind that could be said against her.

'Look what happened with Tony Mavis last winter,' she pursued. 'He was *really* keen. I mean, he liked her for herself. I don't think he had any idea how rich she was ; at least not at

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the beginning. And then when she froze up more and more, as usual, and looked more and more miserable every time he spoke to her, I suppose he made enquiries. Anyhow, he's got engaged to some girl in Northamptonshire now.' She looked aggrieved.

'I never see,' said the general, taking out a pocket telescope and following the swans, 'why it is you worry. She's twenty-one now. Legally, our responsibility's over. If she doesn't want to get married, she doesn't, that's all. She can go and live in London or Paris or New York and be a rich recluse. It doesn't affect us either way, unfortunately. Without the allowances, we shall be back precisely where we were twelve years ago. Or if she likes to go on living here, we needn't cut down.' General Castlemay's affections had narrowed with retirement, and now were confined to waterfowl and topiary.

'It affects *me*,' said Mrs. Castlemay with asperity. 'I'm fond of her, you know. Almost as fond as I am of Beth or Joan. But then they're so easy. Such natural, pleasant manners! There won't be any difficulty in getting *them* married. The trouble will be to stop them rushing into it. But naturally, Agatha . . .'

A door at the end of the conservatory opened, and two aproned gardeners emerged, bearing garlands. The festive foliage of Agatha's birthday was being dismantled early, while the young people were still, no doubt, asleep. The dancing had gone on without a pause until four o'clock, and Beth and Joah and the three young men staying in the house had wrapped themselves in rugs even after that, and gone up to see the sunrise from the gazebo. Agatha, as one would expect, had disappeared hours before. No argument or appeal had ever persuaded her to stay to the end of a party.

Mrs. Castlemay frowned, looking up at the bedroom windows. She could hear the bell at the convent gently ringing: ten o'clock, and the curtains were still close drawn.

'I gave her two glasses of champagne in my bedroom, before anyone arrived,' she said in a low voice, leaning towards her husband. 'You've no idea how difficult it was to make her drink it. I felt it was rather a risk, but perhaps worth taking?'

'You ought to have done it long ago,' said the general, who had emptied a packet of seeds into his hand and was examining them. 'Or had her psycho-analysed. But champagne is less expensive.'

'Yes, I know, but there's the question of heredity.' She dropped

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her voice. ‘After all, *both* parents . . .’ She would not say, under Agatha’s very windows, that both of them had shortened their lives with drink. It was drink that had ruined that rich and fortunate couple, drink which had driven them to provide Agatha with sober guardians, drink which had carried them off. ‘I did feel rather dreadful,’ she said, ‘but I thought at least it would give her a little courage.’

Courage, after all, was what Agatha so lamentably lacked. She always seemed afraid, committed to some mysterious act of refusal; her negations sterilised everything one did for her. The well-cut expensive clothes, better by far than anything Beth or Joan could ever have, somehow looked ridiculous on her when she stood stock still, her hands at her sides, disclaiming responsibility. The jewellery she had inherited from her American mother, when she could be induced to wear it, looked as though it belonged to somebody else. And whenever she was brought within sight of a presentable young man, who by marrying her might have ended Mrs. Castlemay’s guardianship with happiness and credit, she behaved as though she were threatened with rack and thumbscrew.

To some degree Mrs. Castlemay blamed the convent. Agatha had not gone, like Beth and Joan, to sensible jolly schools in the south of England. She had been such a shy and difficult child it had seemed better to let her stay near home, and the convent had reputation. Only . . . hadn’t she seemed to like it a bit too much? No harm in that, in a way; her mother had been a Catholic. Not a good one, as Mrs. Castlemay had reason to remember, but still, quite orthodox. She would have been pleased for Agatha to go to the convent. Only . . . Mrs. Castlemay knitted her brows, trying to apportion the blame. The convent had made all Agatha’s weaknesses worse. She was a silent girl, and the nuns believed in quiet. She was gauche and shy, and they had failed to teach her vivacity. She was a considerable heiress, and they had never thought of stressing the value of money. While as to the social graces (here Mrs. Castlemay pushed back her plate and sighed despondently) whatever one did, whoever one asked to the house for her sole sake, Agatha could be counted upon to disappear, to be found, inevitably, reading or doing needlework in her bedroom.

Scolding had done no good. Holding up Beth and Joan as examples was worse than useless, guaranteed to produce one of those serious, puzzled looks which Mrs. Castlemay found irritating.

Spending money on her was a waste, entertaining for her was received with resignation, like a deserved penance. None of it would have mattered, perhaps, if Mrs. Castlemay had not all along felt, in all the twelve years of her profitable guardianship, obscurely guilty. Keeping a suitable home for Agatha had included a great many matters on which she was unwilling to dwell. The structural alterations, the extra servants and the station car were allowable ; Mrs. Castlemay's clothes were borderline ; but the things that had been done to the garden made her uncomfortable. The trouble with Irish gardens was that there was such scope. There were such acres and acres, and the rarest specimens would grow. What had made it so difficult was that once the general had tasted the lotus of landscaping he had ceased to be ethical.

A man in a pantry apron appeared on the steps and the Castlemays rose abruptly from the table. At the same moment a bedroom window was pushed up and Beth and Joan leaned recklessly from the sill.

'Any breakfast left ?'

'Yes, of course, darling, come down at once. Are the others awake ?'

'The gentlemen are rising at their leisure,' said Beth. 'We've been to see.'

'Oh good. And Agatha ?'

'Gone out hours ago, I should think,' said Joan, and made a face. 'At least she's up, and even made her bed.' The sisters shrugged their shoulders in unison, as though to say, 'Typical !'

'She hasn't been down to breakfast, though,' said Mrs. Castlemay, disturbed. The girls withdrew their heads, and she went into the house.

She found Agatha's room in perfect order and the bed made. It had a curiously impersonal, tenantless air. Why had she done this peculiar thing, on the very morning after her birthday dance, and with three such unusually nice young men staying in the house ? Mrs. Castlemay was visited by suspicion, and went quickly to the wardrobe. There, on its hanger, was the beautiful rich satin dress in which Agatha had managed to look both timid and austere. Mrs. Castlemay had not noticed what time she had gone to bed. She remembered her most vividly and uneasily at the beginning of the evening, when she had stood at her guardian's crowded dressing-table, holding the champagne.

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'This will do you good, dear,' she had told her. 'It will give you courage.'

'I don't want it, Aunt Ethel.'

'But you must drink it, just to please me. This is your birthday. It's your dance. It's so important to make it a success.'

'I'm sure it will be that,' Agatha had said, looking down at the sunny wine and not tasting it.

'But it can't be, Agatha, really, unless you make an effort. You must talk to people, you must help to make it go. I can't have you sneaking up to your bedroom again tonight. This dance is costing a lot of money and it's been a lot of trouble. You really must do your share.'

'But you know I didn't want it,' Agatha had said almost in a whisper, lifting her eyes to give Mrs. Castlemay one of those mild reproachful looks that she found unnerving.

'Of course you want it. Or at least you will when you've controlled your nerves. That's why I'm giving you some champagne. So drink it up, there's a good girl, and enjoy yourself for once.'

'But you know I've never had any before. What if it goes to my head?' She had looked genuinely troubled.

'It won't. I promise you it won't. It'll just give you that little extra courage to be yourself.'

'Oh, if it'll do that!' Agatha had said fervently, and had drunk it almost at a gulp. It had made her face go pink, and her eyes had watered, but to Mrs. Castlemay's surprise she had accepted another glass and had drunk that too. Then, gripping her little pearl handbag as a virgin might have gripped a reliquary before martyrdom, she had gone resolutely down the stairs to the music and voices.

And it *had* worked, thought Mrs. Castlemay, closing the wardrobe. She had watched her anxiously at first, and had seen with delight the emergence of a new and unsuspected Agatha. She had danced; she had answered and even smiled when spoken to; she had accepted ices from the hands of desirable young men; she had glimmered here and there on the crowded floor, moving confidently, like a beauty. Gradually Mrs. Castlemay had relaxed, and pursued her course as hostess with an easy mind, smiling to herself. Beth and Joan were looking particularly charming, and as usual danced and talked and flirted quite twice as much as anybody else. She gave herself up to enjoying their success.

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Mrs. Castlemay wished she had noticed the time when Agatha had disappeared ; but one got so used to it, it called for no remark. And the dance had ended so late, with such a lot of romping, that she had been dying to get out of her shoes and go to bed before the last of them had gone. Her husband was already asleep when she crept into the bedclothes, gently lifting his moustaches at each whistling breath.

She gave the room a last uneasy stare, lingered with obscure anxiety at the dressing-table, and went downstairs. Beth and Joan and their father were in the dining-room, the girls breakfasting heartily, the general helping himself to fresh coffee, which had come up smoking hot. Close on her heels came the best-looking of the young men, dressed with care in captivating country clothes.

'I can't imagine where Agatha's gone to,' she said lamely, when they had exchanged greetings and asked after each other's sleep. 'So odd, that, making her bed instead of leaving it. I suppose she thought the housemaids would have a lot to do.'

'Ah, but perhaps it wasn't slept in,' said the young man archly. 'Have you thought of that ?'

'Good heavens,' said Mrs. Castlemay, 'of course I hadn't.' She saw again the emptiness of the room.

'We'll drag the lake after breakfast,' said Beth comfortably, helping herself to honey.

'Indeed you won't,' said her father, turning with displeasure from the sideboard. 'You know perfectly well the black swan's sitting. I forbid you to go near her.'

Mrs. Castlemay felt her confidence ebbing from her. She sat down at the table. 'No, really, Geoffrey,' she said, raising imploring eyes, 'of course I'm not thinking anything of the sort, but ought we to do something ? It really is so very peculiar, and I can't help wondering . . .'

Out in the hall the telephone began to ring in piercing tones. Somebody had left the outside bell turned on, and the noise came in through the open windows as well, with the stridency of a supernatural summons. 'I must answer that,' she said faintly, glad to escape from the others' sudden stares. The noise of the bell almost disintegrated her senses as she crossed the hall, and when she lifted the instrument a reverberating echo still persisted.

'It's Sister Mary Benedict,' said a voice at last, when the vibration had ceased. 'I'm speaking for Reverend Mother, Mrs.

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Castlemay. She wished you to know that Agatha is here, with us. She is quite safe.'

'Oh,' said Mrs. Castlemay flatly, leaning against the wall. She felt a sudden fury. 'What on earth is she doing there? She hasn't even had breakfast.'

'Oh yes, indeed, she has.' Sister Mary Benedict sounded unsuitably amused, and at the joy in her voice Mrs. Castlemay remembered her. She was the stout nun, the one she had always disliked, who acted as Reverend Mother's secretary and in that capacity used such an affectedly beautiful hand that every letter she wrote looked like a sonnet. 'She arrived about five o'clock, Mrs. Castlemay, and has been talking with Reverend Mother ever since.'

'Well, she must come home then,' said Mrs. Castlemay, brushing this aside.

'But that's what I wanted to tell you. She is staying here. She is sorry for any anxiety she may have caused you, but she is not coming home. She knows now that she wishes to be received as a postulant, and Reverend Mother has decided she shall remain here, pending the Bishop's visit.'

In the pause that followed, while she allowed this improbable statement to sink in, Mrs. Castlemay became aware of quiet voices, busily murmuring together at a little distance. She had a disagreeable impression that Agatha and Reverend Mother were there in the parlour, and that neither of them intended to come to the telephone.

'But Agatha is my ward,' she said in a startled voice. 'She can't do a thing like that without my consent.'

'Ah there, Mrs. Castlemay, I believe you are mistaken. She is twenty-one.'

'But there are other things to consider. Responsibilities . . . You obviously know that there are serious matters involved.' Mrs. Castlemay was visited by a foreboding graver than any that had so far touched her.

'That has all been discussed,' said Sister Mary Benedict. 'Reverend Mother understands the position. Many members of our order have brought handsome fortunes with them. That is a matter of indifference.'

'I would hardly call it that. And I'm *quite* sure Agatha never had the effrontery to do this all on her own. She has been got at.'

'People are sometimes given a wonderful courage,' said the nun

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joyously. 'The child told Reverend Mother that she received it last night. God's ways are not our ways, Mrs. Castlemay. We know where thanks are due.'

'Well, I warn you, I shall see my lawyer,' said Mrs. Castlemay helplessly. 'And unless Agatha comes home, you needn't think I shall send any of her belongings. If she wants them she must come for them.'

'She particularly asks me to say, Mrs. Castlemay, that she wishes you to keep them. She requires nothing. She is very happy for you to have everything there is.'

'I am sure she would never send such an impudent message. Please put me on to Reverend Mother at once.'

'I am afraid she is not available, Mrs. Castlemay. We are very busy to-day, you know, at the convent. Father Curran is here; he is going to say Mass for us in a few minutes, and bless the new dormitory. And this afternoon there is tea for the Children of Mary.'

'I insist,' said Mrs. Castlemay, beginning to cry and at the same time to shake the telephone like a fist. But Sister Mary Benedict was saying good-bye, and her words were lost in the carolling bells of the convent.

The Education of a Prince

Extracts from the Diaries of Frederick Waymouth Gibbs.

1851–1856

DURING the summer months of 1851 a high-minded and well-educated young man named Frederick Waymouth Gibbs—a member of ‘that section of the middle ranks of English Society which supplies the City of London with the majority of brokers and Westminster Hall with the majority of barristers, and Oxford and Cambridge with the majority of successful students’—was selected by the Prince Consort, always appreciative of solid middle-class merit, as tutor to the Prince of Wales and his brother Prince Alfred, later Duke of Edinburgh, then aged nine and six. Naturally the selection was not made without much anxious thought; and Sir James Stephen, legal luminary and Colonial Under Secretary, who had cared for him from early childhood, provided a detailed character-sketch. In whatever related ‘to Truth, to Honour, to Sobriety and to Chastity,’ the young man (wrote Sir James) was ‘exempt from reproach. . . . The moral qualities by which Mr. Gibbs is chiefly characterised are courage and energy. He fears nothing . . . is exceedingly free from all anxious forebodings, and never quailed before the face of any human being. The faults of his character are akin to this temperament. . . . He is self-confident and has a strength of will which occasionally degenerates into obstinacy, and these infirmities now and then exhibit themselves in a demeanour which may be described as brusque, peremptory and contemptuous. On the other hand, he is never morose, gloomy or irritable, but opposes to all the vexations and cares of life a cheerful humour, and a spirit of alacrity and hope. He is perfectly amiable and good-tempered.’

A Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a practising barrister-at-law, Mr. Gibbs agreed to give up his previous employments and join the royal household at the then not inconsiderable salary of £1,000 per annum. His diary, of which the CORNHILL is permitted to print extracts by kind

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permission of Mrs. M. H. Prance, gives a remarkable picture of the education of the future Edward VII—a somewhat difficult and unruly child, many of whose shortcomings (as his tutor shrewdly observed) arose 'from want of contact with boys of his own age . . . and from himself forming the centre around which everything seems to move . . .' The Prince's development was constantly scrutinised; few of his misdemeanours, great or little, were allowed to pass unnoticed. But, although at times he was apt to despair, Mr. Gibbs' energy and pertinacity never quite deserted him, and it is evident that, during the rare occasions when he was released from duty, both the Prince Consort and his confidential aide Baron Stockmar discovered in this brisk young Englishman a sympathetic listener.

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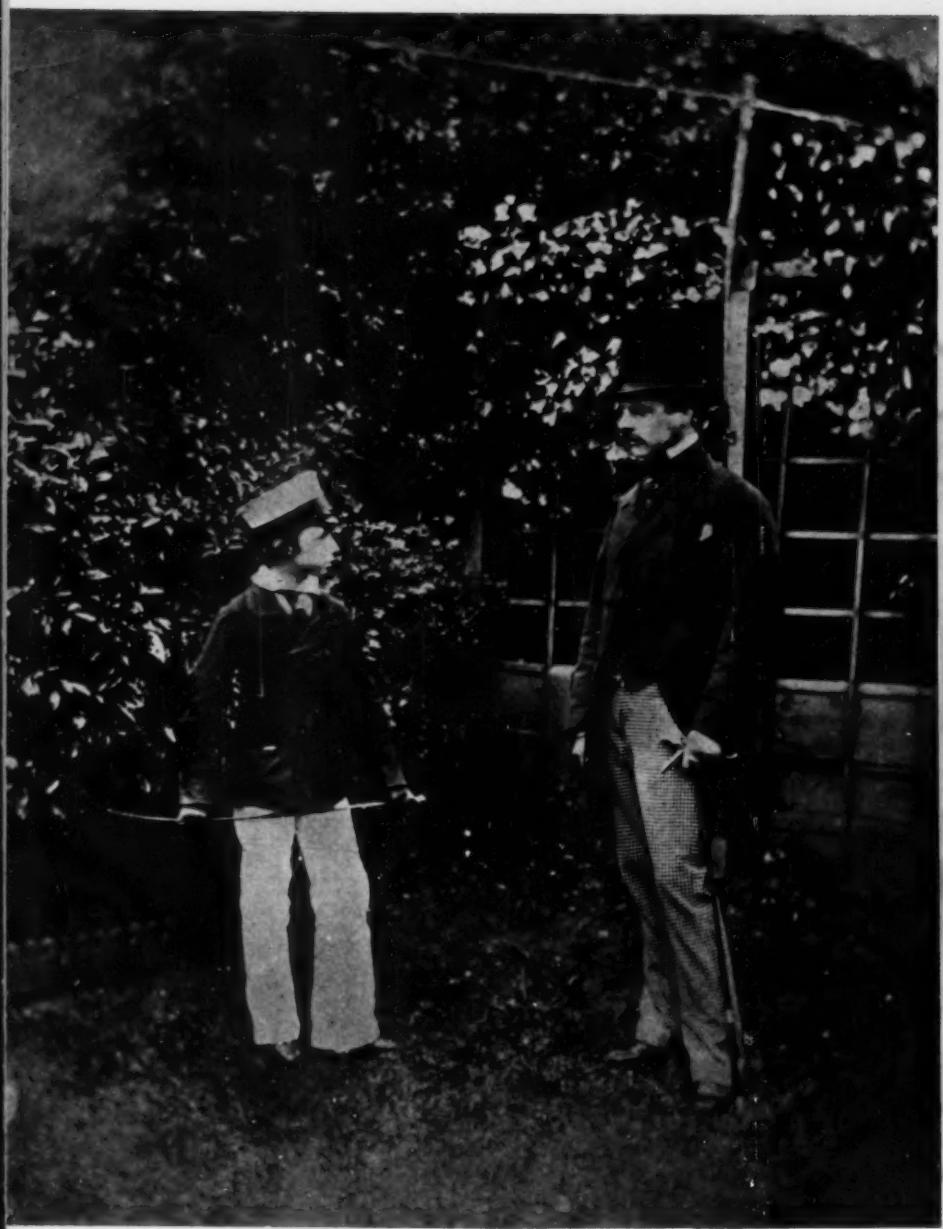
WINDSOR CASTLE.

I came here on Thursday the 15th of January, and began my work on the following Wednesday. I spent the intervening days chiefly with the Princes and Mr. Birch, observing the former, and learning from the latter the general rules and arrangements of the day—the wishes of the Queen on a number of small points—and generally the host of nothings which become important only when neglected. He was very ready to give me assistance, and I found it more agreeable to learn from him than to discover for myself. He was out of spirits, for the boys and he were very much attached to each other, and both parties felt the separation. ‘Poor Mr. Birch was quite overcome at parting,’ said the Queen.

Prince Alfred was sorry to lose a face he knew, and to fall into the hands of a stranger—he was too young and too thoughtless to feel much more. With the Prince of Wales it was different. It belongs to his character to say less and feel more. He thought it necessary to make a sort of apology in his walk for his sorrow, ‘You can’t wonder if we are rather dull to-day, we are very sorry Mr. Birch is gone. It is very natural, is it not? He has been with us so long.’ The Prince is conscious of owing a great deal to Mr. Birch, and really loves and respects him. He takes pleasure in writing him accounts of what goes on, and looks forward to receiving letters from him and seeing him again with sincere affection. . . .

JAN. 26. MONDAY.

Met the Queen this afternoon, and walked with her. She spoke a good deal about the Princes, and made me notice two peculiarities



THE PRINCE OF WALES AND MR. GIBBS



PRINCE ALFRED



PRINCE ALFRED



THE PRINCE OF WALES AS BACCHUS

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in the Prince of Wales. First, at times he hangs his head, and looks at his feet, and invariably within a day or two, has one of his fits of nervous, unmanageable temper. Secondly, riding hard, or after he has become fatigued, has been often followed by outbursts of temper. The Queen said this had been noticed by Miss Hildyard, and wished me to observe it carefully. She told me he had been injured by being with the Princess Royal,¹ who was very clever, and a child far above her age ; she put him down by a look—or a word—and their natural affection had been, she feared, impaired by this state of things.

I said I thought as he grew older, his intellect would grow stronger—but told her my chief anxiety was about his temper and behaviour to his Masters and the servants. I begged her to speak to him, not in the way of reproof, but generally.

JAN. 27. TUESDAY.

The P. of W. was still in an excited state. In the morning it was difficult to fix his attention on his arithmetic. . . .

The music with Mrs. Anderson was not a good lesson. In the afternoon he quarrelled with Prince Alfred in the Conservatory.

In the evening, I read the story of Robert Bruce to him. I was astonished at the eager interest he took in it. . . .

JAN. 28. WEDNESDAY.

Began better—we finished the sums left unfinished yesterday—but walking, he was excited and disobedient—trying to make P. Alfred disobedient also—going where I wished not to go—threatening to go, even when he did not go—and breaking and plucking the trees in the Copse.

I played with them, but it only partially succeeded. On the Terrace he quarrelled with, and struck, P. Alfred, and I had to hasten home. We met the Queen while this was occurring. . . .

Afterwards I saw Baron Stockmar, who said he heard the P. of W. was not very good at present. I told him all, and expressed my anxiety about his behaviour to his Masters, saying I thought I must stop some lessons when he was rude. The Baron agreed, and said, ‘ You must do anything you think right, and you will be supported. It is a very difficult Case, and requires the exercise

¹ It will be remembered the Princess Royal, her father's favourite, became the wife of the Emperor Frederick and the mother of the last ruler of Imperial Germany.

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of intellectual labour and thought.' If this was not the exact combination of words, it was something very like it.

THURSDAY.

Mr. Leitch the drawing Master came. P. of W. very angry with P. Alfred, and pulled his hair, brandishing a paper-knife. I forbade the lesson—he was at first very angry, remained so some time, but cooled.

Out walking I joined their play. The amusement is to act a play—fighting, brigands, knights, etc. form the chief personages—generally the chief part taken by himself. Subordinate given to P. Alfred. I noticed the influence of the plays he saw in the characters, names and incidents. . . .

JAN. 31. SATURDAY.

The day was an improvement—the lesson with Mr. Anderson was stopped because of the P. of W.'s rudeness. He had a cold, and our afternoon walk was short.

P. Alfred thoughtless, and very difficult to make him understand that he must obey.

FEB. 1. SUNDAY.

P. of W. had a bad cold—amiable and better.

FEB. 2. MONDAY.

P. of W.'s cold continued. Mr. Wellesley¹ came, and mentioned to me his extreme difficulty in keeping his attention to anything. He asked question after question, neither following up the subject nor the answers to the questions asked. He gave me a good deal of trouble—but there was an improvement on the whole. Both he and P. Alfred were rude.

FEB. 5.

The Prince [Consort] came to my rooms this morning, and talked about the dismissal of Lord Palmerston, in connection with the explanation given on Tuesday. 'We have got rid of a consummate actor, who has been humbugging the people of this country for a long time. I always said he would have made a capital lawyer, but a very bad judge. He was always taking a side, and that will not do for this country,—it is not for us to be advocates of a cause, but the tribunal to which all other nations may refer. He always agreed with his colleagues on the general

¹ The clergyman from whom the Princes received religious instruction.

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principles—non-intervention is our policy—then he went away, expressed his sympathies without any reference to them—and afterwards told them he had acted as agreed upon, but that such and such events—the event in favour of which he had expressed these sympathies—had happened. In this way, he constantly acted quite by himself, and ended by making his colleagues responsible.'

FEB. 8. SUNDAY.

This has been a much better day. With the exception of one little temper on the part of Prince Alfred, things passed smoothly. This temper was about his reading. His attention had been distracted—and when I called him back to his seat, he refused to come. I spoke as kindly as possible—remonstrated and pointed out the folly and naughtiness of giving way to disobedience and temper—in vain. I spoke to him firmly, in vain,—I raised my voice a little, and told him I must punish him if I had to bring him. He ran off with a mixture of fear, passion and mockery in his face which quite alarmed me. I told him I should not chase him—and at last I induced him to come, but not without threatening to prevent his dining with the Queen.

I showed and felt nothing like anger throughout, tho' opposition lasted a quarter of an hour. The reading was finished badly. In the afternoon he was very amiable and obedient. I think I have attempted to drive him too much the last few days.

In the afternoon the Queen spoke about this to me, complaining that he was stupid and sleepy at present. She said his obstinacy had come on since his being with the P. of W. and added that the arrangement had not done him good.

FEB. 10. TUESDAY.

To-day was the Anniversary of the Queen's wedding day, and the Court went out of mourning for the day. The children had a holiday, and in the afternoon acted some portions of Racine's *Athalie*. It was intended as a 'surprise' for the Prince, the only person who knew nothing of the matter. The play succeeded admirably, the scenery and dresses were pretty and the acting extremely good, particularly the Athalie of the Princess Royal and the Abner of the P. of W. The former was completely a Queen. Both were free from confusion and shyness—

The Prince was some time in my rooms talking about Lord John's new Reform Bill, of which he expressed his approbation.

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He anticipates advantage from the discussion of a Constitutional Subject. ‘People’s opinions on such subjects require to be settled from time to time. In the intervals a quantity of notions are set abroad, which unsettle men’s principles, and the questions need to be discussed that they may have their principles fixed. It is quite the case on the Continent and in some degree even here. On the Continent they start with the assumption that everyone ought to have a vote—then that there should be a representative assembly, a certain number,—and so they form from step to step, watching to see what the result of their combinations will be,—without setting before them any definite object to be attained.’

FEB. 14.

In the evening I went to Baron Stockmar’s room, and found him in the middle of Roebuck’s *History of the Whigs*. I asked him if he thought what Roebuck says of William IV in his Preface is true, for he describes him as a ‘very weak . . . man, a finished dissembler, and always bitterly hostile to the Whig Ministry and their great measures of reform.’ ‘Quite true,’ was the reply, ‘in those days I saw a great deal of Taylor, and he wished me to say this to Ellice and Lord Duncannon, Abercrombie and Lord Durham and others of the party I knew. He wished them to know that King William disliked his Whig ministers, and wanted to get rid of them, though he did not wish me to communicate it as a message from him.’

The Baron praised the character of Peel in the Preface, ‘I will tell you what my solution of Peel’s character is. He did not see very far, but he was a man of great candour and was ready to acknowledge his errors. I differed from him about the Corn Laws, and told him he ought to open the ports, instead of abolishing the law. His answer was that it would be impossible to shut them again. “So much the better,” I said,—“you will gain the object, and everyone will acknowledge the measure to be right.”’

After talking politics, we talked of the Prince of Wales,—and I told him my hope that though it would be a long task to carry him through all the difficulties, he would turn out a good man. He considered on the difficulty and my hope, telling me, ‘He is an exaggerated Copy of his Mother.’

FEB. 18. WEDNESDAY.

I talked again with Baron Stockmar about Roebuck’s book. He respected his opinion of the old King, ‘He was the most stupid,

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ignorant, violent man imaginable. When he came to the throne, he said, "I know nothing of a King's business, and if Sir Herbert Taylor will not condescend to be my Private Secretary, I shall make a very bad King." And so Sir Herbert Taylor became private secretary, and did everything.'

He then told me his stories of Brougham, the first of which he had from Lord Durham, the second from Lord Melbourne. When the Whigs came in, in 1830, Brougham's desire was to be made Master of the Rolls, but the Whigs wished him out of the House of Commons. Lord Althorp went to him and offered him the Chancellorship. Brougham asked to be allowed to consider the subject for the morning, and to consult his brother. This they did not want, so Lord Althorp locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and said he should not leave till he had an answer, and in about half an hour Brougham consented.

The Q. and P. sent to ask me if the P. of W. was unwell. He had behaved rudely to his sister in their presence.

I told them he had been so to me—that he had thrown dirt and swung a large stick at me, and had struck me with a stick in a passion.

The Prince told me not to allow this—that if he did so, I must box his ears, or take the same stick and rap his knuckles 'sharply.'

The rest of that day was not good, but in the evening I spoke strongly to the P. of W. and shut him up in my room. His Father also spoke to him, and it had a good effect.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE. FEB. 23.

To-day Lord Derby formed his Ministry, and in the evening I went to Baron Stockmar's apartments to talk politics. The Queen, he told me, had behaved excellently throughout—taking a high Constitutional Ground. Lord Derby told her that it was exceedingly important for him to strengthen his position in the House of Commons, where he was in a decided minority, and that he should wish to ask Lord Palmerston to join him and to lead the House of Commons, but he feared it would be personally distasteful to Her Majesty. The Queen replied that he was quite mistaken in supposing so. She asked Lord Palmerston to be judged on his merits, that she should object to his being Foreign Secretary—but that she should not object to his holding any other office. Lord Derby said he intended to offer him the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. When it was offered, Lord Palmerston declined,

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not on any ground of principle, but on account of the inexpediency of imposing any duty on corn . . .

. . . Sugden¹ is Chancellor, and we both agreed that it would be an improvement on Lord Truro. He told me an amusing story of Lady Truro. When she was to be married, she had to break it to the Royal Family, and she thought the best plan would be by saying worse of her future husband than any of them could say. So she went to the Duchess of Gloucester an old lady who lived on scandal, and thus described her husband, 'Aunt, I have a piece of news to tell you.' 'What is it?' 'I am going to be married.' 'You, my dear? To whom?' 'Aunt, he is old, fat, vulgar, dirty, and he stinks.'

FEB. 28. SATURDAY.

Last Thursday afternoon the two sons of Mr. Van de Weyer came to play with the Princes. They were eager and excited.

Afterwards I had to do some arithmetic with the P. of W. Immediately he became passionate, the pencil was flung to the end of the room, the stool was kicked away, and he was hardly able to apply at all. That night he woke twice. Next day he became very passionate because I told him he must not take out a walking stick, and in consequence of something crossing him when dressing. Later in the day he became violently angry because I wanted some Latin done. He flung things about—made grimaces—called me names, and would not do anything for a long time. . . .

MARCH 4.

It has been easy to discover that the new Ministry is not viewed with favour here. The Prince took no pains to conceal his contempt. On their first appointment he laughed at what a set they were, and quoted in derision Lord John Manners' poetry :

Let laws and learning, wealth & commerce die,
But God preserve our old nobility.

One remark of the Queen's struck me. She said she could hardly avoid feeling guilty of dishonesty in giving her confidence suddenly to persons who had been acting in opposition to those to whom she had hitherto given it.

¹ Edward Burtenshaw Sugden, raised to the peerage as Baron St. Leonards.

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OSBORNE
MARCH 9. MONDAY.

A very bad day. The P. of W. has been like a person half silly. I could not gain his attention. He was very rude, particularly in the afternoon, throwing stones in my face.

During his lesson in the morning, he was running first in one place, then in another. He made faces, and spat. Dr. Becher complained also of his great naughtiness. There was a great deal of bad words.

OSBORNE
MARCH 10. WEDNESDAY.

This afternoon the Queen took the Princes, and I walked with Baron Stockmar. I was anxious to know his opinions on European politics, and turned the conversation to the subject of Austria. . . .

We then passed to the interests of England—which he thought consisted in there being a strong liberal power in the North of Germany, and in being in honest alliance with it. There is nothing to interfere with the ‘Entente Cordiale’ between England and such a power,—which would act as a check to France on the one hand and Russia on the other. Every English Statesman of all parties, has said, if there be an ‘Entente Cordiale’ between England and France, not a shot can be fired over the rest of Europe. It is quite true, if such an Entente Cordiale could exist,—but it cannot, while the other could. There have been great mistakes made in our Foreign Policy since 1848. The line which Lord Palmerston should have taken was very distinct. He should have said, ‘Our institutions speak for themselves. You may examine them—and if any state or any constitutional party in any state wishes for information or advice about them, we are ready to give it,—but we have no wish to see them forced upon others. They suit us, but they may not suit other nations.’ Had he adopted this language, he would have exercised a very powerful influence in Europe.

He has not a very high idea of Lord Palmerston. His words to me were, ‘I have known him thirty-five years, and I think him a monstrously over-rated man. He would have made an excellent lawyer, he had such great dexterity in making a case. But my complaint of him is this. Either Lord Palmerston you have not sufficient knowledge of the affairs of Europe, or not understanding for your office. He had capital cards in his hand in 1848. There were only two powers standing in Europe, England and Russia,—and he ought at all events to have divided the influence over the rest with Russia, but he played his cards in such a way that Russia

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got all. I saw him often in 1848 and '49, and argued with him, but he treated me with superciliousness till I told him I should not quarrel with him, but I should not talk any more with him on the subject. Once afterwards, he tried again at Windsor, but I refused.

'Then his conduct was intolerable as a constitutional Minister. He used to say to his colleagues, "I don't interfere in your department,—and you are not to interfere in mine." . . .

I remarked Lord Granville had a great deal to learn. 'Yes, Granville is too young,—but I like young men for active life. Old men should be consulted, but where there is a great deal to be done, young men are better. There is the Duke of Wellington. He is a perfect nuisance. Nothing can be done so long as he is in the way. Nations are not like individuals. If your father lives to be very old, you don't decapitate him, but it is different in public affairs. People get tired of old men, and will throw them off, if they don't go. The Duke won't go, if he is not sent, you may believe.'

MARCH 31.

Baron Stockmar and I have talked about the Princes every day for some time past. I have reported to him my observations,—and we have discussed schemes for their further guidance. To-day his conversation was for me particularly worth remembering.

'I did not know you before, but now I do, and we could not have found anyone better. You are perfectly free from prejudice. You make your observations, and you apply all the powers of your mind to the subject,—that is a good basis to start from. You are in for it now, and you must make it the business of your life to do what you can, and if you cannot make anything of the eldest, you must try with the younger one. We must make experiments and we shall see what will answer. I have talked to the Prince and the Queen, and have told them that they must be able to answer to their consciences for having done everything that could be suggested—and you will have no difficulty with them. You shall have all my influence to help you, as long as I live. . . . Then the Queen is young, and we may hope she will live some time. . . .'

WINDSOR CASTLE
APRIL 1st. MONDAY.

The day was a bad day. On my mentioning it to Baron Stockmar, he answered that he could tell me for my comfort that every-

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one was pleased with my management of the Prince. He quoted to me a remark of the Queen's made the day before : 'I never felt at my ease with Birch. There always seemed to be something between us. Whenever I was with him, I always felt as if either he was in my way, or I in his, but it is not so with Gibbs. He has always something sensible to say, and I can speak freely with him.'

He then added, 'I always told them it would be so, and it will help you to know. A man does not get on at Court by flattery—even when Courts are very different from what they are now. You may say what you like—the only thing to know, is how to say it.' . . .

MAY 3. MONDAY.

. . . Baron Stockmar has been ailing for some time. His liver and digestion are out of order, he loses health and strength—can eat but little, and sleeps less soundly,—and believes that something organic is wrong. We agreed that the political prospects, though as he said, it is impossible in politics to speculate upon 'eventualities,' are not bright. . . .

MAY 8.

I paid my daily visit to the Baron, and we discussed the policy of the Government in proposing to fill the vacancies caused by the disfranchisement of Sudbury and St. Albans. He had before expressed opinions not very complimentary to the Government, but to-day his remarks on the two leaders were very decided. 'The Queen is in a dangerous position—she is in the hands of two gamblers. Lord Derby gambles—I don't know why—from the love of gambling. Disraeli gambles from ambition, or perhaps to gain some personal end. He is a political mountebank. I learnt that expression from the old Earl Grey. At the time of the emancipation of the South American Colonies of Spain, I was a great admirer of Canning, and praised to Lord Grey his statesman-like views and papers. His answer was, "You mistake the man, he is only a political mountebank." If Lord Grey could say it of Canning, I am sure it can be said with much more justice of Disraeli.'

JUNE 18.

The Queen, the Prince, the Princesses, the Princes, Miss Hildyard and I went to Westminster Abbey. I had been ordered to be

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ready by nine, but we started before that. Our start was amusing. There was no equerry, and the wrong carriage had been brought for the Queen. The Prince was angry, and sent in haste for Col. Bouvierie. He was found, and said in reply to the Prince's angry reproof, 'No orders were given, Sir—we did not know her Majesty was going—we thought the children were going as they went to the Museum,' laughing with the utmost good-humour. The Master of the Household was then sent for. He was at prayers, but was fetched, and before we had crossed the Court, we saw him in chase, so stopped our carriage, and he came with us.

We hurried through the Abbey—to have finished by Service time: and only half looked at things. The chief object of our visit was that the Prince might see what could be done towards restoring the monuments. He suggested to me that it would be very desirable to have a series of models, of the Royal Tombs for instance, to represent them as they were in their unmutilated state—that these should be exhibited, and that they would serve for artists to copy, and excite a desire to preserve the originals. I replied to him that he should devote a room in his proposed institution to 'English sepulchral Monuments'—and that it would make an interesting collection, to which he agreed.

The Queen shewed great interest in the Coronation Chair,—looked for it eagerly—and made several remarks about the arrangements at the Coronation.

AUG. 30. MONDAY.

We left Osborne for Balmoral. The Queen told me that during the journey the P. of W. behaved very well, employed himself, and was not fidgetty. . . .

SEPT. 20.

During the last few days the P. of W. has not been in a good state. He gave me the idea of a person who had had too strong a tonic. During most of last week, he was good and amiable, but very feeble,—incapable of constant or continued application. I tried him with some simple accounts, but he displayed great incapacity in doing them. The Prince noticed also that he had been childish. Owing to our taking some excursions, I was able nearly to suspend his lessons, and I advised that he should be taken out deer-stalking as much as possible, and but little work exacted.

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NOV. 26. FRIDAY.

Baron Stockmar returned last Thursday week. . . . Since then he has been seeing most of the leaders of party. He told me he was glad to have returned, as he thought he had come in the right moment, as everything is in an unsettled state. His expression was, ‘We are in an age of mediocrity—everyone is thinking of himself, not of the public good. I have advised the Queen to be careful not to identify herself with any of the political parties. It is her duty as a Constitutional Monarch to hold the balance between them.’

We passed from public to domestic affairs, and he told me the Queen has asked him if he had seen me, and whether I was not a good deal discouraged. His answer was that I had been disappointed in my expectations—but that I was not discouraged, and was quite prepared to do my duty in the matter.

MARCH 2. 1853.

I mentioned to Baron Stockmar, my interview with Dr. Hawtrey, and the complaints he had made of the behaviour of the Princes to their Eton friends, and added that the elder one—I could not speak too decidedly of the second—had a pleasure in giving pain to others—that it was an ultimate fact in his character borne out by the observation of all around him. . . .

APRIL 4. 1853.

While we were at Windsor during Easter Week, I asked Baron Stockmar where he had been at the beginning of the present reign. He told me that he came over from Germany at the Queen’s request in 1837, and remained here till 1838 when he went to travel with the Prince. During that time the Queen came to the throne, and, ‘I did,’ he said, ‘two things. She was quite a girl and knew nothing of the business, and was surrounded by women, such as the Baroness Lehzen, who knew as little or less, and wished to lead her. I saw nothing was to be done till they were removed. So I looked round, and saw who there was to guide her. I induced her to put herself under Melbourne. He was not a fit person to be the guide of a girl, but I took him as a pis-aller—as he was the only person. He had a very low opinion of men and women, put round her some persons whom he should not—would not try to make the Court moral—because he said it was no good trying—Courts always had been immoral, and would be always so. But still he was the best person we could get, and we got rid of the influence of the women.’ . . .

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APRIL. 1853.

Rules for Meals in the latter part of 1853, in consequence of the complaints about Loud Talking, etc.

1. The Princes should take care to sit properly at Breakfast and Dinner, and should not put their arms on the Table, or play with the Knives and Forks and Spoons.
2. They should not interrupt the conversation of their Papa and Mama, and any visitors. To do so is disrespectful and unkind.
3. They should not on any account find fault with, or give directions to their Sisters and each other. They will obey this rule the more cheerfully if each recollects how annoyed he himself feels at being reproved by the other.

If these rules are carefully obeyed for a fortnight, the Princes will be rewarded. If they are disobeyed, the one who disobeys will not be allowed to dine with the Queen the next day.

* * *

After more than two years of strenuous effort, Mr. Gibbs' conclusions as to the Prince of Wales's development were temperately optimistic. Much still remained to be done; for 'the Prince of Wales's character (he reported to the Queen in May 1854) appears to Mr. Gibbs a perpetual conflict between Impulse and Principle. Speaking generally, his impulses are not kindly. They lead him to speak rudely and unamiably, to tease his companions . . . and consequently his playfulness . . . constantly degenerates into roughness and rudeness. The impulse to oppose is very strong. . . . Connected with it, there is in his mind an irritating feeling that others are irritated against him. Mr. Gibbs . . . thinks that the Prince is conscious of not being so amiable as he ought or even desires to be—or so forward as is expected for his age, and that in consequence he looks out for reproof, and fancies advice even conveys a reproof beyond its mere words.'

The situation, nevertheless, had certain brighter aspects. 'On the other side stands the Sense of Duty, supported by the wish to gain the approbation of his Papa and Mamma . . . and by the sense of self-approval and satisfaction which follows on doing right.' True, he lacked concentration, and 'thinking requires of him an effort—sometimes a painful effort.' But 'something may be done cultivating a taste for amusements calling for perseverance and thought.' Though he was not insensitive to the call of duty, it seemed that he was more readily touched through the appeal of

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pleasure. Conspicuous among such faculties as he possessed were ‘imagination, an appreciation of what is beautiful, and a sense of the humorous. . . . The third faculty shows itself in his enjoyment of caricatures and droll pictures. Mr. Gibbs has been struck with the just and critical spirit with which he appreciates and tries to imitate them.’

The summing-up is not entirely unhopeful : ‘Upon the whole it must be remembered that his character is childish for his years, and must for some time be backward. . . . In his best moments he has a real desire to learn. . . . These efforts are not long sustained, but they show enough latent power to justify the hope that when he arrives at an age to reflect upon the responsibilities and requirements of his position he will rouse himself to greater application from a sense of Duty, and if in the meantime it is possible to furnish him with that elementary knowledge, which is acquired only in childhood, his natural shrewdness and good sense will enable him to understand and efficiently discharge the duties he will be called upon to perform. Of Prince Alfred there is much less to say. . . .’

Mr. Gibbs continued to discharge his onerous functions until 1860, when—whether gladly or reluctantly it is impossible to guess—he rejoined the Northern Circuit.

The Rock-Monasteries of Cappadocia

BY PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

OUR three days of travel across Asia Minor, from Constantinople through Broussa and Ankara to the ancient Caesarea, was a journey backwards into a remote and dateless world. The lion-coloured uplands of Anatolia looked Biblical and gaunt. Buffalo-carts and an occasional string of camels, all heading for this odd town on the flank of an extinct volcano, raised long cylinders of dust, and thence our journey took us into the heart of Cappadocia. The plain and the crumbling biscuit-coloured villages, distinguished only by their minarets, fell away behind. The road wound into a stony cordillera, then sank through a tormented ravine to the little derelict town of Urgüb. Half of it is hacked out of the mountain-side and appears about to subside again into its native rock, taking with it the threadbare acacias of the market-place and the circle of ancient and cloth-capped Turks bubbling in silence over their nargilehs—the last vestiges of humanity before the labyrinth swallowed us up.

For a labyrinth it was, cut through the soft tufa in deep gulleys that suddenly deposited us at the lip of a wide canyon. Curling into the distance, it contained within its steep walls a region of such wild strangeness that we rubbed our eyes—the landscape of a planet, the surface of Moon or Mars or Saturn : a dead, ashen world, lit with the blinding pallor of a waste of asbestos, filled, not with craters and shell-holes, but with cones and pyramids and monoliths from fifty to a couple of hundred feet high, each one a rigid isosceles of white volcanic rock, like the headgear of a procession of Spanish penitents during Passion Week. These petrified *cagoulards* extended for leagues to the farther end of the ravine, where they were reduced by distance to a barrier of sharks' teeth.

As our eyes adapted themselves to the glare, near the bases of the cones appeared minute dark apertures, approached by rough flights of hewn steps. Descending into the ravine and climbing one of these staircases at random, we stooped through a dark portal. The steps ended in a glimmering chamber lit from above

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by a deadened shaft of sunlight. Slowly a Byzantine church, complex and tenebrous, materialised about us. We were standing beneath a central dome frescoed with Christ Pantocrator, his right hand raised in benediction ; and all round, in the eight attendant cupolas, the shadows accumulated. Thick horse-shoe arches sprang from the supporting pillars, walls and arches being stuccoed and intricately decorated in ox-blood, yellow, pale blue and dark green tempera. Round the sides scenes from the life of Christ were frescoed, the Baptism near the start occurring in tartan-striped water which arbitrary perspective had reared into a tent-shaped cataract. The multicoloured evangelists, Solomon, fully robed and crowned, and Elijah splendidly mantled, glowered from the columns. Red rectangular seams across the floor achieved a simulacrum of paving. The illusion of an ordinary Byzantine church was complete.

The next cone contained a still more intricate shrine, poised high in the apex, at the end of a dark uterine ascent. The church, richly painted with Betrayals and Last Suppers, had apse, dome, cupolas, flanked with aisles and completed by an iconostasis and a narthex ; but—and so convincing was the imitation of an ordinarily constructed church that it took some time for the oddity of it to sink in—three of the four pillars had been smashed clean away beneath the capitals. The survivor gave us the insecure feeling of children under a table miraculously poised on a solitary leg. The painted arches converged in three pendentives and hung there like stalactites. Only then did the freakish nature of these churches become fully apparent. Only then did we remember the vast, blind matrix of rock that pressed in on all sides, and into which tenth- and twelfth-century monks, outlining the doorways with adze and chisel on the blank rock face, had so astonishingly dug their warrens. What clearer proof could be found of Byzantine rigidity than the excavation, in defiance of every difficulty and architectural need, of such punctilious replicas ? Not a detail was disregarded. Narthex and dome and pillar and apse and basilica were hacked out of the darkness, as unfalteringly as brick was placed on sunlit brick by the ecclesiastical masons of Salonica and Byzantium.

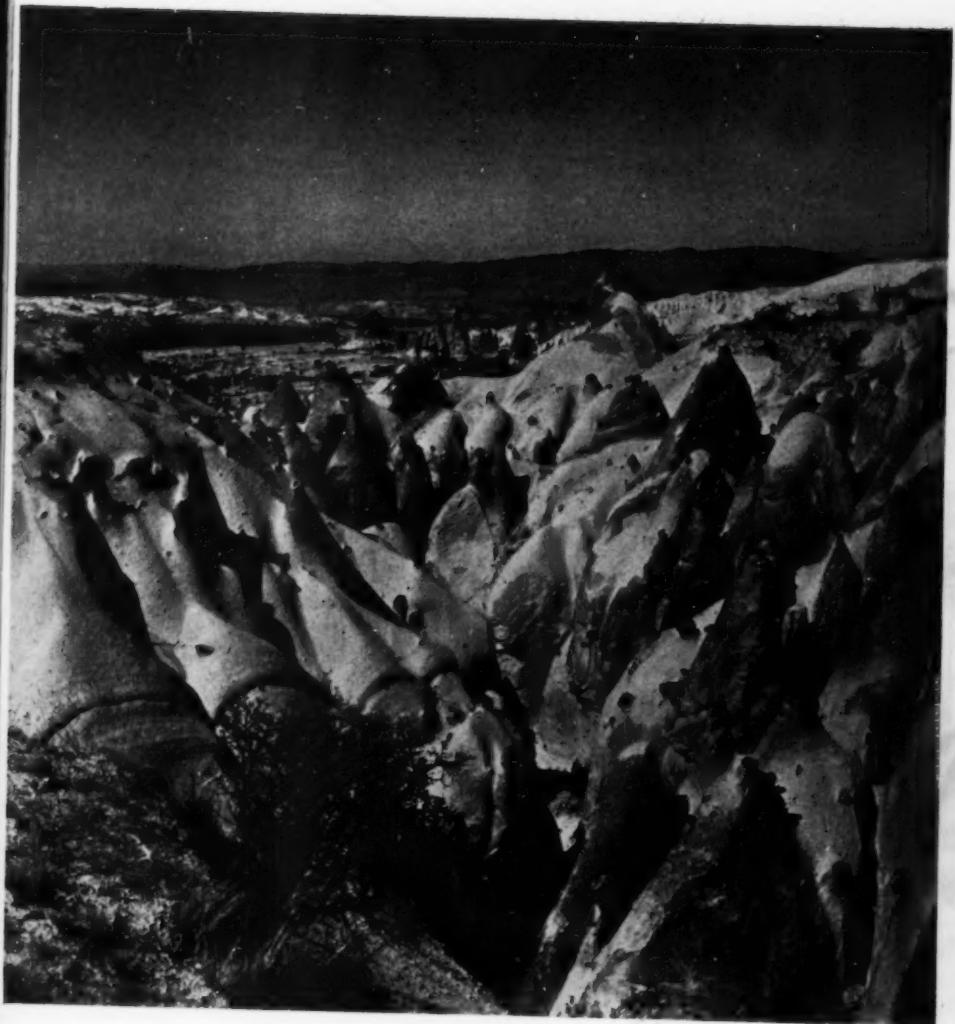
The churches can be numbered by dozens, and the neighbouring hermitages by the score. Every second cone is chambered and honeycombed till it is as hollow sometimes from peak to base as a rotten tooth. Now and then the dark interiors have the size

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of small cathedrals. Occasionally, where the rock is thin, the brittle sides have fallen away to expose the painted prophets and seraphim to the open air. But most of them, posturing in stiff hieratic attitudes, are hidden in the cold, rupestral half-darkness ; SS. Constantine and Helen supporting the True Cross between them, St. John Prodromos bearing his haloed head in a charger, while an obliging curve in the foliage of a miniature tree redeems from scandal the nakedness of St. Onouphrios. The personage who appears most frequently—for Cappadocia, in the time of the Emperor Diocletian, was his birthplace—is our own island-patron, St. George. Armoured, red-cloaked, heavily helmeted, and reproduced *ad infinitum*, he cranes from the saddle of his white charger to drive his lance through the serpentine coils of innumerable dragons. Eternal twilight surrounds these prancings and death-throes. But each time we emerged the same incandescent glare was beating down. Out of the shadowy churches, we were once more in the kingdom of *accidie*, in the land of the basilisk and the cockatrice, of Panic terror and the Noonday Devil. The day seemed stationary, as if Joshua, conjuring the cobalt sky, had commanded the sun to stand still.

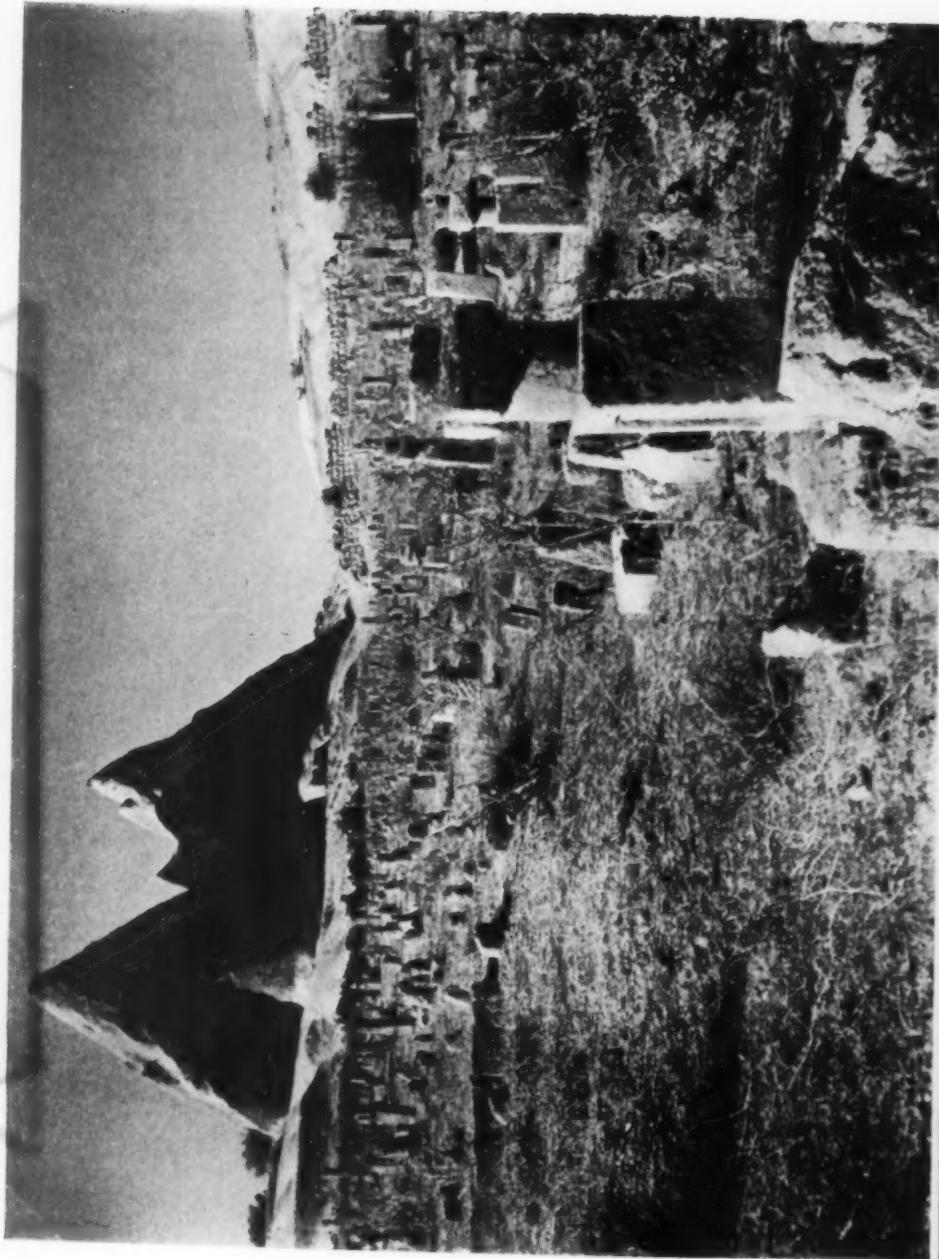
Then, climbing a spur in the middle of a canyon, we peered into a deep valley green with the foliage of plum trees and wild apple overshadowing the winding track of a rivulet. The sides of the canyon, too, were covered with the straggling descendant of a vineyard : the last seedlings of vines and orchards planted here by the monks a millennium ago. (The pious Moslems of Cappadocia still drink a thin, pale brew—not unlike the vintages of Anjou and the Maine—in imitation of their Christian predecessors.) The wilderness was humanised. As we gazed, a flight of doves sailed out into the gulley with a sudden rustle, the sun catching all their wings simultaneously as they wheeled and settled in one of the dove-cotes hewn for them by the vanished monks. They are the only survivors.

Who were these monks ? When did they come, and how did they live ? Even Father Gersagnon, a scholarly Jesuit who studied this valley for twenty years, could find no explanation. Did they arrive as hermits in flight from the corruption of Byzantium and Antioch ? The troglodytic refectories, with the long stone tables, the wine-vats and runnels scooped out of the rock, the great hearths still black with the smoke of those almost pre-historic meals, the shelves for kitchenware and the slots for hanging saucepans, all



IN THE VALLEY

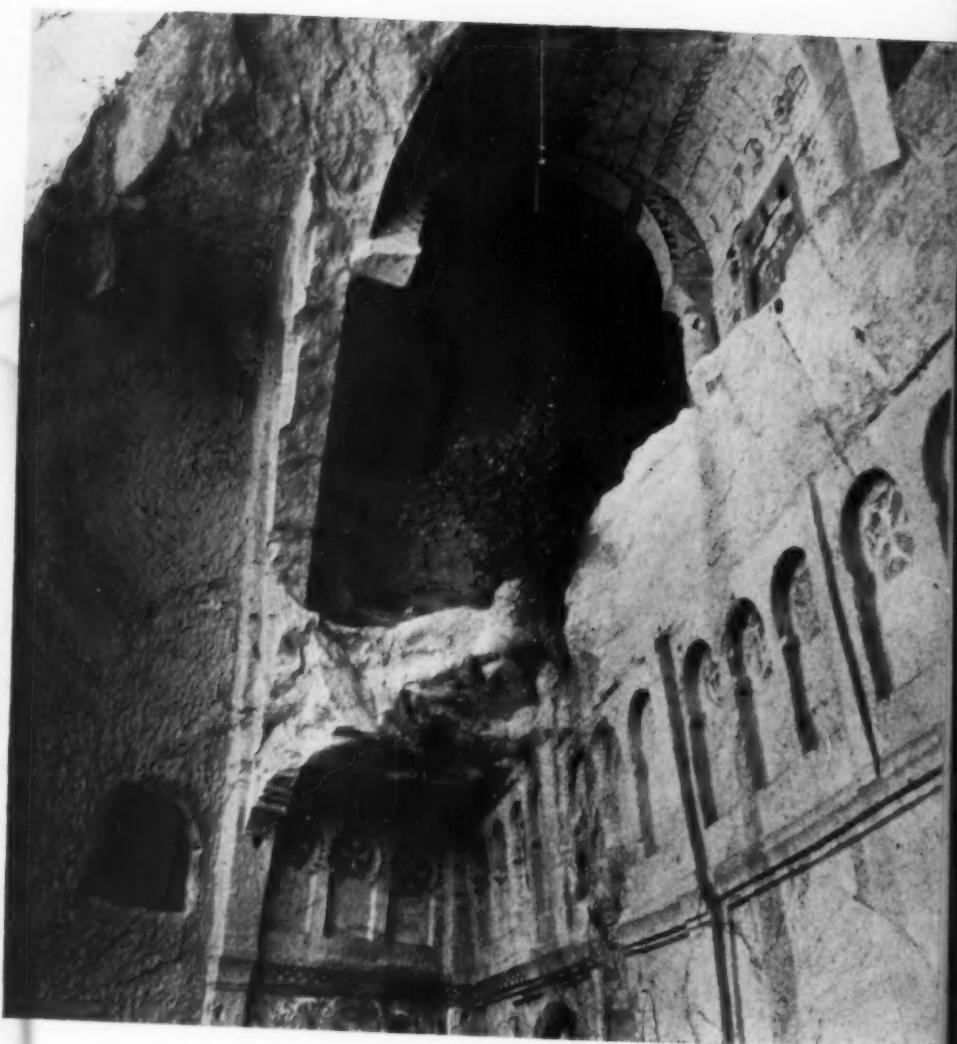
Photographs by Joan Rayner



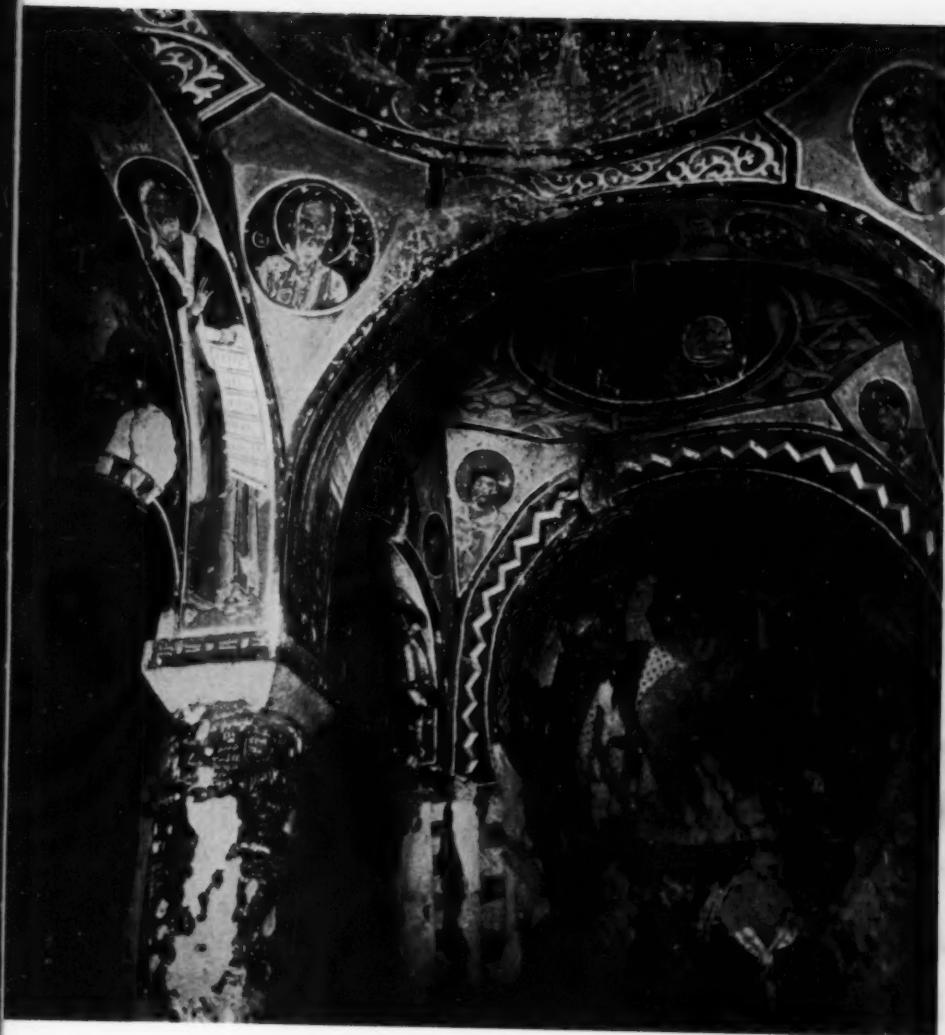
TURKISH CEMETERY



EXCAVATED PINNACLE



INTERIOR OF CHURCH AFTER COLLAPSE OF OUTER WALL



PAINTED INTERIOR OF MONOLITHIC CHURCH



ST. GEORGE OF CAPPADOCIA



ST. ONOUPHRIOS. THE SOLID ROCK WALLS HAVE BEEN PAINTED
TO REPRESENT MASONRY



PAINTED INTERIOR OF CHURCH UNCOVERED BY ROCK-FALL

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point to a communal life. Rows of trough-like tombs lie side by side in special burial caves. The date of the churches coincides almost exactly with the first irruption and early expansion of the Seldjuk Turks in Asia Minor. Cappadocia, in pagan times, was a famous refuge of the Zoroastrians. Did the Christians also seek sanctuary in these fastnesses in flight from the barbarian newcomers? These shaven-pated and pig-tailed hordes, leaving their gloomy Asian steppes, were sweeping westwards with scimitar and kettle-drum on the first stages of the journey of destruction which was to carry them with the centuries to the walls of Vienna. While the Byzantine armies were contesting the Turkish advance, small wonder, then, if the Greek contemplatives of Asia Minor should have sought out such a place of hiding and seclusion. The vast stones, poised in grooves down which they could be slid to seal the entrances of some of the larger caves, would seem to corroborate this hypothesis.

For it is all guesswork; and a tentative reconstruction of the former life of the valley is more hazardous still. We can be certain that the monks followed the wise rule of St. Basil—the contemporary of Julian the Apostate, the correspondent of St. Gregory Nazianzen and of Origen, who had been born, centuries before, in nearby Caesarea. We know, too, that this was no hotbed of scholars and grammarians, for the iconographical spelling and the scrolls in the hands of the painted saints are arbitrary and phonetic. (Here, and in ejaculatory prayers hastily daubed in vermilion paint—‘O Lord, save Michael thy Slave,’ for instance—the phonetic spelling provides additional proof that tenth-century Greek was pronounced exactly as it is in Athens today.) It was plainly monasticism of a simple kind. The Levant, at that time, was sprinkled with ascetic extremists. Anchorites immured themselves in caves. Stylites, seated on the capitals of ruined temples, wore their lives away in prayer and meditation, and the stranger Dendrites chained themselves for decades to the topmost branches of lofty trees. Perhaps the most likely analogy is to be found in Primitive paintings of the Thebaid in Italian galleries and in the ikons of the Orthodox Church—those toppling mountains riddled with caves and swarming with tiny dark-robed Fathers, all of them hooded or cylinder-hatted and equipped with voluminous and hoary beards, and all busy at their individual tasks of praise and mortification and husbandry. One of them reclines on the spikes of a harrow, another wrestles with a demon, a third

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dreams on a pinnacle. Others plough, or pound their grain with pestle and mortar, prune their vineyards, or fish in streams with rod and line. Yet others are preaching to attentive congregations of birds, admonishing lions and docile panthers with lifted forefinger, or strolling by the banks of streams with their arms companionably clasped round the necks of antelopes and gazelles. The date of the valleys' evacuation is as problematical as that of the cutting of the first grotto, and as unknown as its cause. Contemporary chronicles and the records of travellers are strangely silent. One plays with the thought of lost edicts from Byzantium evoked by some unknown heresy, of a sudden berserk outbreak of the advancing Mongols, of decay through a falling-off of vocations ; and then, reluctantly, for lack of evidence, every theory must be abandoned. The caves, the crepuscular churches and the numberless painted saints remain enigmatical as ever.

* * * *

The sluggish sun moved down the heavens at last, stretching long shadows against the canyon walls. Leaving the cones behind us, we found ourselves in an empty region of cactuses and of iron-coloured tufa pinnacles balancing lumps of basalt on their thin and wavering spikes. A hushed and igneous land of hanging scoriae turned crimson in the setting sun. Suddenly we came to a well surrounded by Turkish women, descendants, it may be, of the invaders who drove out the monks. On their heads their right hands supported heavy pitchers ; and, at our approach, their left hands drew their veils across their faces with a fluttering and simultaneous motion. Then, in the shadow of a monolith, a rustic mosque appeared. So attuned were our eyes and our minds to the idea of excavation that the white cube, the dome and the minaret, it occurred to us, must be solid—or mysteriously embedded in some hard and transparent element through which we were magically advancing. The air was vitreous, intractable, crystalline. The whole world seemed inside-out.

Music in Germany—I

BY NICOLAS NABOKOV

‘FASTEN your safety-belts, please,’ said a neutral voice in the loudspeaker. I looked out of the window where the left wing dipped menacingly over the ground. The horizon jumped up and down, and the cottony fog receded skyward, taking the shape of huge, ink-spotted cumuli. Lakes, canals, parkways, villas and shrubbery reached for the plane’s trembling wing, while farther beyond lay the grey-brown mass, the leprous lesions of the ruined city. Yes, there it was, so familiar, so unchanged, as I had left it three years ago. The same pitiful squares of vegetable gardens planted between ruins and rubble; the same treeless parks; the same naked sadness, ruin, desolation; ‘the toothed gullet of an aged shark.’ The plane skimmed the jagged ruins towards the grey semicircle of the Tempelhof Terminal. Inside, the terminal seemed equally unchanged. The worn-out sofas and club-chairs stood in the same old places, facing the counters and billboards, and the broad high walls and windows. There was also the same sickening smell of doughnuts and coffee, the same sunless light losing itself on the tired grey-white walls, and even the same row of bored, jaundiced porters in their black Luftwaffe overalls.

‘Ça n’a pas l’air drôle,’ said a French co-traveller, and with a gesture towards the porters, added, ‘En voilà des croque-morts !’ One of these ‘undertakers’ recognised me, and ran up, his face beaming. ‘Velkom too Barleen sir may I carri your begg how haff you bin,’ he said in a loud drone, collapsing three sentences into one. He picked up my bags and we started towards the exit. The Customs ritual took five minutes; a furtive chalk on my bag. I climbed into a tiny ‘bug’—the Volkswagen-type taxi—and we began driving towards the Schlosstrasse and the centre of West Berlin. Suddenly all was different, unrecognisable. From the low windows of the car, I could see rows of small stores, their show windows packed with goods; and one-story dwellings, newly built and freshly painted. True enough, between them were gaping cavities, blocks of ruins, heaps of rubble. But most of these cavities

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were cleared of rubble and transformed into parking lots, the ruins had been tidied and surrounded by brick walls, the rubble had been piled in orderly heaps, encased in flower-beds, or framed with borders of freshly mowed grass.

And the people had changed. No more the shallow, elderly men, the gaunt women with their sickly children, who with sullen expressions dragged themselves along the streets of Berlin in 1945 and 1946. The people looked younger, fresher, fatter. They walked faster and some had new clothes, new handbags, new shoes. Mothers pushed new perambulators. Boys and girls passed me on new bicycles. The taxi turned right on the Kaiserallee, clanking and clattering towards the Kurfurstendamm, West Berlin's commercial aorta. Even the Kaiserallee had changed since 1945. The mass of pinkish ruins had receded into the background, and had acquired an ageless, permanent visage. Some of it was already covered with moss, grass and even ivy. It had become, like so much else in Berlin, part of a curious, neo-romantic bombscape.

We stopped at the Hotel am Zoo where the *Herr Portier* himself took me up in a silent and sedate lift to a large, impeccable room. It looked newly painted, waxed, dusted, brushed, polished, rubbed and scrubbed. ‘Some change !’ I said to the porter. ‘*Na . . . dann !*’ he replied with a bitter grin. ‘*Dann* it was all a mess,’ he continued in English, ‘what could you do mit de French and English *journalisten*. So disorderly, so disorderly . . .’ he lamented. ‘All of dem coming and going . . . always in and out . . . three or four in a room . . . never sleep, always parties . . . and what goings on at those parties . . . what drinking . . . what ladies !’ . . . And having thus completed his lament, he added sententiously, ‘It costed de manachment nearly a million marks to put de Hotel again into a ships-shape.’

I asked for a telephone directory and enquired whether it contained Russian sector numbers. He looked at me in astonishment, visibly taken aback by my unexpected request.

‘No, the Hotel does not have a Berlin-OST telephone book and Russian numbers you can’t get,’ he replied with a proud finality in his voice.

I picked up the telephone and called a friend, the composer, Boris Blacher. ‘Oh ! Hello !’ answered a cheerful voice on the telephone. ‘Welcome back. We got your wire and we’re expecting you. When are you going to come ?’ I suggested after dinner. ‘No, no, why after dinner ?’ he replied. ‘Come for dinner.’ And

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he laughed. ' You see times have changed ; now *we* can invite *you* for dinner. We'll ask the Rufers to join us and it will be like old times.'

My good friend, the eminent German composer Boris Blacher, has had a complex and twisted career, an illustration of the hazards and vicissitudes to which a creative artist is subjected in our absurd and cruel century. By birth he belongs to a Russified Baltic family of German extraction which, after the outbreak of the Bolshevik terror, fled from Russia to Kharbin in Manchuria. During those post-revolutionary years Kharbin was a unique and fantastic city. From a small town on the outskirts of two empires it suddenly became an Eastern capital of Russian refugees, a kind of Russian Paris of Asia. Thousands of Russian bourgeois and intellectuals flocked there, escaping Lenin's régime, and soon established Russian schools, political parties, Russian newspapers and libraries, Russian publishing houses and hospitals. A fairly prosperous and enlightened bourgeoisie readily and busily supported all these ' culture-in-exile ' enterprises. But, besides being a capital of Russian culture, Kharbin became also a centre of international intrigue, of dubious double deals and murderous vendettas. Reds mingled with Whites, tough Tsarist war lords, in the pay of Japan, fought tenacious wars with secret OGPU bosses, ephemeral bankers concluded import and export deals about goods whose very existence was doubtful, and Japanese agents murdered Chinese counter-agents, or vice versa.

Blacher got his first education in music at the Russian conservatory of Kharbin and only moved to Germany, I believe, in the middle twenties. Once in Germany he completed his studies and soon developed a great facility in composing, combined with an equal versatility in the various techniques that govern the modern use of musical materials. Fortunately his versatility in adopting the devices discovered by his older contemporaries went well in hand with a natural lyrical gift, and with an intuitive sense of clear-cut formal structure. He also developed a liking for a transparent sound texture, achieved by means of neat and well-mannered linear writing. Towards the end of the twenties and in the early thirties, compositions by Boris Blacher began to be performed, his first scores began to be printed and the more alert music critics and young composers talked about him as a rising star.

Like many musicians all over the world, Boris Blacher has always been essentially apolitical. Although strongly opposed to the rising

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tide of Nazism in the early thirties, he did not bend to the other extreme, as did some of his colleagues, and he did not join, co-operate or even sympathise with the Communist party in Germany. Yet, despite his, as yet relative, lack of musical status and non-political record, as soon as the Nazis took power Blacher was forced to go into eclipse for the duration of the twelve-year Third Reich. This forced eclipse was because of Blacher's partly Jewish ancestry, because Blacher's music fell into the category of so-called 'degenerate art' and because of Blacher's own reluctance to play any rôle under the Nazis. His music ceased being performed or printed in Germany, and Blacher's name was henceforth never mentioned in German newspapers or magazines. I vaguely remember hearing about him during those years, when he was more or less in hiding ; that he was diligently composing ; that he had a small job as an arranger and orchestrator at the Dresden radio station ; and that occasionally some of his music did get performed in a semi-clandestine way.

Towards the end of the war, Blacher moved to Berlin, and when the collapse came he and a close friend of his, the gifted young conductor, Leo Borchard, also a Russified Balt of German extraction, suddenly found themselves in an unexpectedly advantageous position. Neither of the two had collaborated with the Nazis ; both had suffered from the obscurantist strictures of the Nazi régime ; both spoke Russian fluently ; and both were known as serious, highly promising musicians of the 'pre-Nazi' era. Consequently, as soon as General Berzarin became Berlin's first Russian commandant, Leo Borchard was ordered to put the Philharmonic orchestra back on its feet, while Blacher was assigned as the music 'specialist' of the Russian-controlled radio station of Berlin. Here, by a curious irony, he assumed exactly the same duties he had performed during his long exile under the Nazis. He had to arrange, adapt, orchestrate and write background music for radio. Unfortunately, Leo Borchard was killed soon after the United States troops entered Berlin. He lived in the American sector and one evening he went out after curfew hours. A sentry shouted at him and told him to stop. He either did not understand the call or did not hear it. The sentry, obeying his orders, shot and killed him. Thus both Leo Borchard and the innocent American G.I. became victims of the absurdity and inhumanity of our time.

Fortunately no such accident happened to Boris Blacher, although

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he may have wished that some less drastic accident would help him to break his connection with what he used to call 'my radio penance.' He was compelled to continue at the Berlin radio for nearly two years. But his fame as a composer was rising fast in Central Europe, Switzerland and England. He was asked to write operas, symphonic pieces, quartets and piano music by all sorts of radio stations, musical associations and festival organisations. He had in stock a sizeable amount of music composed during the lean Nazi years. Besides, during his long radio penance he had developed a technique of composition surpassing in rapidity even such champions of compositional stenography as the Italian opera composers of the eighteenth century. Blacher's output for the years 1945-46 were two and a half operas, four symphonic pieces, one oratorio, several chamber music works, songs, piano music and, of course, kilometres of radio music.

This phenomenal accomplishment was achieved in the wretched surroundings of post-war Berlin, and in a physical condition that alarmed all Blacher's friends. He had, during those years, several consumptive attacks, and at one time some staff members of the American Military Government provided Blacher with an urgently needed month's rest at a Swiss sanatorium. But despite all these difficulties Blacher finally succeeded in disentangling himself from his radio obligations and began to make a living as a free-lance composer, occupying posts at the Berlin Conservatory, at the music summer schools of Bryanston in England and Salzburg in Austria. For, besides being an eminent composer, Blacher is also a teacher of brilliance. His analytical versatility enables him to initiate young composers in the secrets and devices of all modern techniques. 'I want my students to master the techniques of Stravinsky, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Bartok and others as quickly as possible so as to prevent their becoming images of these masters,' he says. Among Blacher's students are some of the best young composers of Central Europe, such as the Austrian composer Gottfried von Einen, whose opera *Danton's Death* was produced with considerable success at the Salzburg Festival in 1948.

I met Boris Blacher during the winter of 1945-46 and we soon became friends. I liked his imaginative, agile mind, his amusing wit, his crisp sarcasm about his own work, about Berlin and about the state of music in devastated Germany. He seemed so different from other Germans with their stodgy spirit and ways, with their

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constant laments and protests of innocence or with their embittered sense of inferiority. On the heavy horizon of Berlin's civilian life, with its innumerable hardships, the Blachers, both husband and wife, seemed light, witty and fresh. It was not that they were inordinately gay people ; but Boris' eyes held an amused and friendly glint and he was optimistic and confident in the future. They were among the very few Berliners I knew at that time who had not lost their sense of humour, and had not developed what the late German poet Ringelnatz used to call, 'The ingrown toenail complex of the German race.'

The Blachers lived far out in the American sector, and it took me three-quarters of an hour to get there. Boris greeted me cheerfully on the steps. 'Well, well,' he said, offering me a chair, 'sit down and tell us all about yourself. Where have you been, what have you done and what is new in America ?' and he pronounced America like Russians do—with a soft m and a long e. I looked at him, then at the room, seeing the same cracks and crevices in the walls and ceiling, the same oversized furniture clogging space, and the same blue eyes smiling at me. I was startled by his sharp, emaciated features, his long grey hair, his protruding nose and teeth. The same paper-knife face, I thought, and suddenly remembered how I once went to a French bookstore in New York and how, glancing through the uncut pages of a book, I realised that I owed Blacher a letter and went home and wrote it.

'How long are you staying in Berlin ?' he asked. 'Or are you, like most Americans, just between two planes ?' And he continued with a smile, 'Isn't it true that Americans stay two or three days in Berlin ; just enough time to collect material for several articles ? Then they go back and write wonderful things about us Berliners—how courageous we are, what splendid morale we have, how well we resist hardships. . . .' He spoke in an amused and slightly malicious way, yet there was no trace of scorn or sarcasm in his voice. I replied that I was going to stay in Berlin for six days, and that I was counting on him to guide me around and take me to hear all the new music.

'That's not difficult,' said Blacher, and laughed. 'You don't have to stay six days in Berlin to do that. You can do it in two.'

Blacher's wife came in with a roast and placed it on the table. I couldn't help staring at the meat with astonishment. 'Ah yes,' said Mrs. Blacher, as if reading my thought. 'This is the first

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time we can invite you to a real dinner. In 1946 only black marketeers could afford butter, white bread and roast beef. Now . . .

'But you know,' interrupted Blacher, 'sometimes I regret the hunger of those years. Now that we have it all . . .'—and he nodded towards the plate his wife was passing to him—'I'm not so sure that those hunger years weren't in many ways better than . . . At least then we were full of hope . . . and now . . . what can get better now ?

'But let's talk about you and about America,' he started anew. 'What have you written? How is Virgil Thomson? (He had met Thomson when the latter came to visit Berlin in the summer of 1946 and wrote a brilliant post-war report on music in Germany, naming Blacher as one of the top composers.) Have you seen Stravinsky? How is his opera progressing? Have you heard any of it? What interesting new music is there in America? What is Menotti's *Consul* like?' He kept bombarding me with similar questions all through the meal. I told him all I knew and did my best to give him a complete picture of musical affairs in America.

The Rufers, father, mother and daughter, arrived in time for dessert. The Rufers, although different in temperament and cultural background, had in other ways a kinship with the Blachers. Joseph Rufer, the eminent Viennese musicologist, and a disciple and friend of Schoenberg, was the first to resume a music conservatory in the American Sector of Berlin in 1946, and to publish a music magazine, *Stimmen*. He, his wife and their daughter, Iselin, were, like the Blachers, friendly and 'light' people and, like the Blachers, had not lost their sense of humour, their natural gaiety. I asked Blacher to show me some of his new music, but he refused. 'First of all,' he said, 'I haven't written anything for months and, secondly, why should I bore you with my music?' I pressed the point; I wanted to know why he had ceased writing.

'I don't know what to tell you,' he said hesitantly. 'I simply don't feel like it. Besides, I have written too much music in the past . . . and . . . why, may I ask, should I be expected to write music all the time and particularly now?' Rufer agreed with Blacher. 'I don't see how composers in Berlin can be expected to compose music. Everybody's mind is elsewhere.' Blacher's wife nodded.

'We can think only of one thing: *Wann wird es wieder losgehen?* (When will it begin again?)'

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'No!' exclaimed Iselin Rufer, her face taking on a sarcastic expression. 'No. *Wann ist es losgegangen?* (When did it begin?)'

'Yes . . .' agreed Mrs. Blacher, 'it has begun but we will not know it until the night we are awakened by the shouting, and then it will be all over. . . .' And she did not finish her sentence.

'No, I didn't mean exactly that,' said Blacher; 'it's not the fear of a new war that made me stop composing. It's something different. You see,' he said, 'in the last four years I have explored in my music most of the techniques, styles and forms which are current nowadays. I have tried to experiment and to understand most of the æsthetic problems raised by my contemporaries. Suddenly I feel tired of them all and realise that very little new has transpired in music in the last ten or twenty years. Of course a lot of music has been written and some of it is quite good, but . . . but the principles were established long ago—some thirty or more years ago. . . . Somehow I feel that we have come to an impasse and that all our efforts are quixotic; they only lead to a kind of repetition or continuation of the same old things. Besides, the public continues to prefer Brahms and Wagner to our music. Nobody really seems to need new music.'

'In the early post-war years, all seemed hopeful,' he continued. 'Even though we had nothing to eat in Berlin, everything was exciting. We had been cut off from the rest of the world and had lost contact with what all of you were doing abroad. I remember how interested I was when, in 1945, you gave your lectures here on music in America. I heard the names of Copland, Thomson, Barber and other American composers for the first time. Then, all news from abroad seemed fresh and stimulating; the world outside of Germany was a vast unexplored territory. Now, of course, I realise that it was largely an optical illusion.'

'And even politically . . . then, at least, I was foolish enough to believe that somehow things would work out and we would all be able to work in relative peace and rebuild our broken culture. . . . But now . . . now, just look around and see what goes on, here, in Berlin. We are living on the front-line, in trenches, and the only incomprehensible thing is that, as yet, nobody is shooting. Of course that makes for constant anxiety and gradually paralyses one's will. It makes one feel old and worn. Most of us have grown fatter in Berlin. So much so that sometimes I can barely recognise some of my colleagues in the conservatory. But in a true sense we are more tired than we were. I often think that you in America

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must feel the same anxiety but probably your degree of awareness is less. Ours is perhaps more acute, more immediate. The reason is simple. Even a five-year-old child in Berlin understands it. The reason is *there*—and he pointed in the direction of the Soviet sector.

There was a silence. Everyone looked down and all smiles were gone. Then Blacher's voice, calmer, gayer, broke in. . . . 'Maybe, if I were in America,' he said, turning to me, 'I would feel otherwise, I would write again, and teach. You know how much I like teaching.' And he looked me straight in the eye and said emphatically, 'I believe that today America is the only country where a composer can work fearlessly.'

It was late when I left the Blachers but I didn't want to go to bed. I told the cab-driver to take me to the centre of Berlin, to the Potzdammer Platz where the British, American and Russian sectors meet. We drove through well-lit streets. Strains of dance music were coming from cafés and night-clubs, and caravans of huge trucks rattled along, exhaling clouds of black Diesel smoke. The driver stopped me on the British corner of the Potzdammer Platz in front of a newly rebuilt department store. I got out, and walked towards the Brandenburg Gate, past the former gardens of the Reichschancellery and the Foreign Office. On both sides, banking the street, lay mounds of rubble. Beyond, dark ruins. The street-lights grew scarcer and dimmer. The night was empty. In the silence there I heard only the whiplike resonance of my steps.

At the Brandenburg Gate a file of cars waited to get into the Russian sector; and, as I passed behind them, I noticed a policeman in black, standing on the other side of the gate checking plates and papers. I stopped near the last arch of the gate, and peered through it. As I looked at the weird cavities of the Pariser Platz and, beyond it, at the dim, dead Unter den Linden, the sense of threat concealed in the night came over me. Just in front, beyond the column upon which I leaned, practically within arm's reach, lay the boundary. Suddenly I felt its sinister and almost palpable reality. There it lay, under the shadow of the war-scarred gate, the border-line that divided this vast, helpless city into two parts and made all life seem an absurdity. And Blacher's words came back to my mind: 'The only incomprehensible thing is that, as yet, nobody is shooting.'

(To be completed in the next number.)

Sicilian Notebook

BY PETER QUENNELL

APPROACHING Palermo, the coastal road from the west runs beneath Monte Lepre. On stormy days when its top is hidden by clouds, and curling vapours boil and fume up its almost perpendicular gullies, 'Hare Mountain' recalls some tremendous Alpine fastness, evoked by the Byronic imagination of an early nineteenth-century steel-engraver. Bold and craggy and forbidding enough, it had the added charm, when I passed beneath it, of being the refuge and base of a renowned Sicilian brigand. Giuliano was still a potent figure, making regular appearances in the Sicilian press and enjoying the publicity accorded him by journalists all over Europe. Female journalists were particularly attentive; and, during our stay in Palermo, an enterprising Scandinavian scribbler, known as 'la Zilliacus,' was arrested climbing the slopes of the mountain where she claimed that she had already spent some days or weeks in her bandit-lover's hiding-place. Taken to a police-station, she broke a window, damaged furniture, insulted and assaulted the gendarmerie and uttered terrible threats of Giuliano's vengeance. The local papers, though at the time much preoccupied with the apprehension of an especially ghoul English criminal, '*il vampiro di Londra*', canvassed the affair at length, paying particular attention to its amatory aspects, with an eloquence that must have delighted both Giuliano and his pretended mistress. The bandit, indeed, was an exceedingly vain young man; and had it not been for his personal vanity, he might have escaped an early death.

Foreign commentators sometimes assumed that he was a member of the Mafia. In fact, nothing could have been more out of harmony with the practices of that ancient and respected institution than his showy exploits and vain-glorious public statements. A small black-market operator who happened to kill a policeman, thereafter took to the hills and developed a large-scale business of brigandage and blackmail, he had little in common with the silent, discreet, sober, always unobtrusive, often elderly personages who

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control the Mafia throughout Sicily. . . . But what is the Mafia ? I began to enquire, tentatively at first, fearful I might be trespassing on an awkward or a forbidden subject. Sicilian acquaintances, however, showed not the least embarrassment, and answered my questions with alacrity, even with a touch of pride. For the Mafia has its roots in the past, not only in Sicilian history but in the native character, moulded by over two thousand years of alien domination. The island was always an occupied country—colonised by the Greeks who drove the indigenous Sikels into the rugged central districts : by the Carthaginians who harried the Greeks, and by the Romans who substituted their empire for the Carthaginian yoke, importing tax-gatherers and oppressive governors, of whom Verres, prosecuted by Cicero, was the notorious arch-type. Cicero's *Verrine Orations* give an extraordinary, though possibly exaggerated, picture of that voracious *parvenu*, travelling in state across his plundered province, never on horseback like a decent Roman, but like a middle-eastern prince in a litter supported by eight servile bearers, reclining upon a 'cushion of transparent Maltese embroidery stuffed with rose leaves, he himself wearing one garland on his head and another round his neck, and putting to his nostrils a gauze bag woven of the finest linen with delicate sprigs and a filling of rose petals.' His requisitions devoured the harvests ; his appetite for works of art, omnivorous and undiscriminating, violated the sanctity of many famous temples. Verres symbolised Republican Rome at its worst and stupidest ; and after the Romans, besides a multitude of barbarian invaders, came Byzantine Greeks, Saracens, Normans, Spaniards and Italians of the mainland, each leaving behind a distinct trace—frequently a splendid and memorable trace—of the power they had exercised, none of them completely assimilated into the country they had held down.

Thus the established government was invariably suspect, identified in the Sicilian mind with some form of corruption or foreign exploitation. Judges and police were usually venal. The Mafia is a permanent Resistance Movement, a law beyond the law, operating at a level where legality is powerless. A word from the local Mafia-chief may bring a burglar hat in hand on to his victim's doorstep, begging to be allowed to restore the stolen goods, apologising profusely for the preposterous mistake he made. The Mafia warns or punishes wrong-doers, settles disputes and also avenges the wounded honour of those who serve it faithfully ; and a large landowner, who befriended us while we were in Palermo, told us

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that at that moment he was endeavouring, so far without success, to engineer a peace-treaty between a fellow landowner, who had offended or insulted a *Mafioso*, and the Mafia high command. As it was, the wretched offender could not go home to his country-house. The Mafia did not threaten his life. They merely regretted that they could not guarantee his safety. He might be shot down at any turn of the road ; and, assuming that he remained unhurt, his servants would quietly leave him and provisions fail to reach him. He had offered to wipe out his offence with money, to pay whatever ransom they might care to name. The reply was a decided negative. Money lost its value when Honour was in question.

A jealous regard for his personal honour, carried to chivalric lengths, is said always to have been characteristic of the Sicilian peasant's outlook. A wife's infidelity is punished by death ; the innocence of an unmarried girl is rigorously supervised ; and 'I defy you to look at—what I call really *look at*—a woman anywhere in the country,' remarked an informant whose idea of 'looking' was no doubt based on the customs of the mainland where to examine every unknown female one passes with lingering sexual curiosity is the good-natured practice of most Italian town-dwellers. The Sicilians are still a romantic race, judging at least by popular preferences in the field of art and story-telling : scenes of the legends of Charlemagne and his knights cover the panels of the painted carts they ride in, and the Paladins interminably reappear among the characters of the puppet-plays. The puppet-drama continues to draw an enthusiastic audience. There is a well-known theatre in Palermo, another in Catania ; the second is hidden away in a somewhat wild and slummy neighbourhood ; and, before he agreed to take us there, our guardian of the moment explained that negotiations would be necessary. Those negotiations were conducted at length ; but after a series of mysterious telephone-calls it was arranged that we should drive with our Catanian friend to one of the main thoroughfares and pick up an unknown guide who would conduct us to a meeting-place. The guide, when we had picked him up, was careful to observe the best traditions of conspiratorial literature. He would not name the piazza for which we were bound, but preferred to mutter quick directions as we drove along the evening streets. In a darkened alley we stopped at a door ; he knocked for admittance, whispered to an old woman, vanished through a wicket-gate, re-emerged, instructed us to drive

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on and presently told us to dismount at a small and squalid café. Around the walls sat a collection of *figurants*, mute and watchful over their coffee-cups, perfect theatrical representations of a gangster's bodyguard. Our host, on the other hand, the local *Capo di Mafia*, who had with him a Sicilian deputy to whom we had already been presented, wore the neat uniform of a prosperous southern business-man—a long wooden-looking black overcoat and non-committal black hat. He was beautifully shaved ; his eyes were unusually alert, and he had, I remember, a strangely pink-and-white skin. Polite and unsmiling, he lent our melodramatic encounter an air of grave propriety. Hands were shaken ; bows were exchanged. Amid a murmur of compliments and thanks we set out to see the puppet-show.

We found it at the bottom of a narrow, rutted, unpaved, almost unlighted lane, full of inquisitive onlookers and predatory children. Without an escort, our car might have lost its tyres, and we should certainly have had some uncomfortable moments arriving and departing. As it was, the crowd divided quietly in front of us, reformed decorously behind us and, since the performance had been arranged for our especial benefit, gradually flooded in to occupy the empty seats at the rear of the theatre, where they remained absorbed and appreciative until the final curtain went down. The Sicilian puppet-theatre is genuinely popular art ; no genius has ever arisen to lift it from the primitive level. It remains the occupation of large industrious families who paint the back-cloths, stitch the clothes and hammer out the armour, handle the puppets and supply the throats they speak through. Every detail is carefully stylised—the backgrounds against which the drama is played, with their conventionalised castles and palaces (reminiscent of the architectural ornamentation of an English canal-boat) and their stiffly regular garden-walks ; the trappings that the puppets wear ; the tone of voice used to distinguish each separate class of personage. Distressed heroines affect a dulcet bleat or twitter, heroic knights a magniloquent bellow, rising and falling in sonorous Southern cadences, villains and ogres a hoarse, terrific *fee-fi-fo-fum*. The puppets themselves are elaborately appointed, their swords, helmets, breastplates and greaves of brightly polished beaten tin ; and, when armoured warrior meets armoured warrior, swinging and lunging across the stage at the end of the long iron rods with which the handlers manage them, the clash of their furious collision—for each is the size of a well-grown child of seven

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or eight—echoes around the theatre walls. Commonplace realism is never attempted ; and the surging movement with which the actors advance—usually head foremost while their unjointed legs trail out behind—makes them appear to be swimming or flying rather than walking upon solid ground. The speeches they endlessly deliver are spoken in a dialect intelligible only to a Sicilian audience. . . .

Concern with the doings of Charlemagne's paladins may seem odd in the slums of a crowded modern coastal city : it is less strange among the villages and hill-towns of the lonely central regions. All peasant-life strikes the urban intruder as cold and bare and melancholy ; but the world of the Sicilian peasant has a peculiar air of grimness, owing partly to the character of the people themselves—many of them dark inheritors of Saracen and Carthaginian blood—partly to the conditions that govern their daily life and labour. The landscape they inhabit is lonely and yet overcrowded ; for it contains few small villages and, except here and there, where Mussolini's land-reforms have had some effect, fewer single farm-houses. Driven by the age-old fear of rapine and brigandage, the peasant-farmers usually congregate in isolated hill-settlements, from which they ride forth at the hour of dawn and to which they ride back again when twilight is descending. At daybreak they slowly invade the fields : from the clump of yellow-grey houses upon a windy hill-top a long silent procession of families takes the tortuous downhill road, blankets pulled over their heads, everything they need for the day strapped to the crupper or piled in the cart that follows them, one after another deserting the line and jogging off into the open country. Darkness approaches, and the procession reassembles, group succeeding family-group, around carts nearly submerged beneath mountainous loads of brushwood, but each a distinct unit, separate and self-absorbed. Most of the men carry a shot-gun slung across their shoulders ; and, as a tall mule shies at the lamps of the car and plunges suddenly towards the side of the road, sharp ears pricked with terror and glassy eyeballs starting, the cloaked rider, rigid in the saddle, looks momentarily as aloof and romantic as Rembrandt's *Polish Cavalier*.

The same air of pride and separateness is perceptible in the gravely strolling crowds of a Sicilian village-square or main-street. The crowd, as in a North African city, is predominantly masculine ; but the colour of its clothing is sable instead of dingy white. In

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some regions the cloaks that the peasants carry are made of dark-blue ribbed velvet, handed down from father to son till they are almost inky-black with use and age ; and I was told by a young man, owner of some property in a remote central district where agrarian unrest was prevalent, that, when he set out one evening under armed guard to attend a local conclave, peasant after peasant stepped from the track, raising his cloak on his arm to conceal the lower part of his face, thus warning the passers-by of his formal anonymity and disassociating himself from any trouble that might occur during the next few hours. My informant added that the effect was chilling ; and his adventure, he explained, had taken place near Enna, a hill-city equally sad and ancient, in which from an earlier visit, while it was still called Castrogiovanni, I remembered having plumbed the depths of gloom and loneliness. Perhaps I had been unlucky in the day I chose, a cold but clear spring afternoon. Dusk was beginning to swamp the landscape, running down from the crevices of the hills, advancing with the long shadows of the acropolis on which the city perches ; and all around 'the Navel of Sicily'—for Enna is the midmost point of the whole Sicilian land-mass—swept the desolate rise-and-fall of tawny naked mountain-flanks, with an angle of Persephone's sacred lake shining cold and faraway. Enna was a home of the cult of Demeter—not of the kindly corn-goddess whom Grecian settlers worshipped, but of the Black Demeter revered by the indigenous Sikels, horse-headed divinity of the earth and underworld ;¹ and on the edge of the town there is a flight of steps and a rough quadrangular altar clumsily carved from the native black volcanic rock, a sanctuary being used as a public latrine when last I visited Castrogiovanni.

Tufa, or pumice-stone, quarried from the hill, was also the substance employed by medieval and seventeenth-century architects. The surface of the buildings look coarse and dark and gritty ; and I recollect wandering in a trance of depression through dark and narrow thoroughfares, past small, dark-visaged, baroque churches, occasionally pausing at the dim threshold of some exiguous drinking-place, which enclosed three or four old men, hatted and cloaked, seated silently together beneath a single electric-light bulb. Old women, dark-shawled, slipped in and out of a church-door. The

¹ Pindar calls Demeter *Chalkokrotos* or 'bronze-rustling,' an epithet that puzzled commentators suppose must refer to her more savage Cthonian aspects. But may it not have been suggested by the metallic shudder of the wind travelling across a field of ripe corn ?

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hotel was bad and expensive ; and as night fell the surrounding obscurity seemed to be flooding in through every issue, rising from the gulf of darkness below, borne on the gusts of the icy plangent night-wind. Yet, if Enna is a focus of primitive gloom—situated close to the gate of Hades whither gloomy Dis in his chariot hurried the reluctant Corn Maiden—it owes much of its desolation to merely human agencies. Here as elsewhere the forests have been cut down, and goats have stripped and destroyed the tender, hopeful new growth. Sulphur, a mainstay of Sicilian industry, is now mined beside the Lake of Enna. But in classical times the whole valley was celebrated for its richness. Hounds were reputed to love the scent, confused by the exquisite effluvium of meadows, flowers and blossoming shrubs ; 'bronze-rustling' corn-fields yielded a hundred-fold, and the rocky stronghold of Cthonian Demeter surveyed the labyrinths of a huge garden dedicated to Persephone.

The luxuriance of central Sicily has vanished with its woodlands. To recover that richness one must follow the coast ; for, whereas the mountains of the centre, like their inhabitants, have an almost northern gravity—the flowers that grow by the road are usually hedges of woody wild geranium—the broad coastal plains round Palermo and Catania are full of lemon-yards and orange-groves, mixed with silvery plantations of the far more ancient olive. Lemon, orange and cactus were all introduced to Sicily by its Arab conquerors ; both fruits are said to have come from India, from those fantastic countries lying towards the sunset which inflamed the imagination of the landlocked Mediterranean peoples ; and, as they burden the branches among their flowers and foliage, both still keep something of their mysterious and romantic quality. While the orange belongs to the sun, the lemon's charm is lunar, its rind being pale and cool and smooth, the colour of moonshine during the hottest summer months, its waxen blossoms having a pervasive scent that brings a suggestion of midnight into the heat and glare of midday. The orange by comparison seems to burn with inward warmth. Yet the colours that its globe assumes remain extremely various, ranging from a mild and delicate yellow to a fierce and dusky copper-red. The orange-groves around Catania include an immense acreage of dark-leaved trees, laden with oranges of many shapes and colourings ; and wherever the orange-trees go they are followed by a peculiar weed which grows so densely and rapidly that it soon overwhelms and obliterates other vegetation. Its name we were unable to learn—a peasant, working in

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the garden, vaguely referred to it as *un fiore*; but it bears small flowers of a pallid saffron shade, and its long, succulent, green-white stalks creak and crunch beneath the footsteps. What a setting for idyllic love! Dark-foliaged, ruddy-fruited, the laden trees are everywhere—a garden of the Hesperides, trackless, endless, undisturbed. Underfoot, musically resilient, the most welcoming of natural beds. . . .

Sicily, after all, was the birth-place of Theocritus—hence the remote fountain-head of European pastoral poetry; and, though Theocritus wrote of Sicilian shepherds amid the cosmopolitan confusion of new-built Alexandria, in the shadow of the half-barbaric court of Ptolemy Philadephus, the landscapes he evoked were not altogether dream-stuff. In spring at least there are the flowers to recall him. Plants, it is true, like trees and human beings, have their seasons of decline and historical vicissitudes, appearing in one country, disappearing in another, scattered across fresh territories while they vanish from their birth-places, and many of the flowers we picked on our journey may have reached his native island since Theocritus left home and set sail for Cos and Egypt. But the embroidery of a Sicilian spring still suggests his *Idylls*—those recollections of his innocent youth before he traversed the threshold of the Alexandrian literary world and joined the competitive crowd in the Museum's marble lecture-rooms. Theocritus was a citizen of Syracuse; towards the end of his existence he is said to have returned there; and the stone-walled fields between Syracuse and Noto are starred and spangled with innumerable blossoms springing as close and as thick as in the flowery background of some medieval tapestry.

Perhaps most beautiful—certainly most classical in their beauty—are the wild anemones. There are anemones red and blue, the red smaller and black-centred, with diminutive blood-red petals of a peculiar glistening silkiness; marigolds, buttercups and dwarf snapdragon; gaunt asphodel and hispid borage; mallows of a splendid Tyrian purple; gentian-blue speedwell and creeping miniature sweet-pea; besides a tall and impressive plant, later identified as monkshood, which showed large, grey, thickly-furred leaves and big fantastic yellow flowers, each in the shape of a curling lip and deep over-arching monastic cowl. Anemones, mallows and asphodel properly belong to the Theocritean landscape. The author of the *Idylls* was an unwilling town-dweller devoted to the country; and, in spite of his affection for country-pursuits,

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which caused Robert Frost, a distinguished exponent of modern pastoral poetry, to declare that he would rather meet Theocritus at a dinner-table than any other dead writer, one must not attempt too close an identification of the classical and the romantic, or the Greek and the English, points of view. The plants and the flowers mentioned by an Hellenic poet are seldom celebrated for their own sake, as they are celebrated again and again by Shakespeare and Herrick, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Gerard Manley Hopkins—with a sense that the flower is a life in itself, exquisite problem and perpetually disturbing challenge to the human eye that focuses it. No, they are appropriate adornments of the rustic scene, decorative reminders of some mythical tale concerning gods and demi-gods, or links in a garland to be woven about the beloved's brow. Homer and Sappho were, no doubt, exceptions ; but Theocritus' nostalgia for meadows and mountains and caves was singularly devoid of romantic or pantheistic feeling.

Such emotions arise during the latest periods of literature, also during the earliest. Art may recover its youth through sophistication, as did European writing and painting in the nineteenth century ; but the sophistication of Alexandria seems at this time to have been peculiarly deadening and to have produced a tyranny of critical taste, by which literature was held in immense regard but any attempt at original literary creation was subjected as soon as it appeared to the most harsh and jealous scrutiny. Callimachus was the arbiter of literary decorum ; and, since he himself was incapable of prolonged poetic effort, he discouraged length in others and austere announced that a great book was a great evil. Besides, the taste of the period, though scholars might struggle to preserve its purity, was by no means unadulterated. Alexander's unification of Greece and subjugation of the independent city-states in which the Greek genius had achieved its earliest flowering, had been a prelude to his conquest of the East, over which he had ranged like the Indian Dionysus ; and already the influence of Eastern modes had begun to lie heavy on European culture. His successors were Eastern monarchs ; and, while Theocritus lived and wrote in Egypt, Ptolemy Philadelphus followed the Egyptian custom of taking to wife his own sister Arsinoë. Ptolemy's coronation-banquet was a triumph of Asiatic opulence, the imagery of Hellenic myth being presented in a setting of Syrian or Persian splendour, with interminable pageants of gods and goddesses, satyrs, sileni, maenads, bacchantes, wood-nymphs and sixteen hundred garlanded boys,

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following a resplendent parade of gold and silver vessels, the whole procession winding its way past the dining-couches of the favoured guests, beneath white-and-scarlet awnings, among innumerable decorative trophies, banks of laurel and myrtle, and exhibitions of statuary by celebrated Old Masters, across a carpet of lilies and roses, brought in mid-winter from the royal hot-houses. But the chief fascination of the show was its vulgar realism—the voluptuous verisimilitude of the mythological scenes enacted. Many of the statues even were observed to be 'wearing real clothes.'

Apart from the courtly compliments he was sometimes obliged to pay, Theocritus' verse contains numerous reflections of his Alexandrian background. Thus in the famous Fifteenth Idyll, he describes the domestic existence of two prosperous and frivolous married women, Praxinoë and Gorgo, natives of Syracuse but adopted citizens of the Egyptian capital, setting out with child and slave-girl to admire a religious spectacle arranged by Queen Arsinoë, and gossiping as they go about their improvident, possessive and drably unattractive husbands. In their veils and shawls and fashionable hats, they suggest Tanagra figurines possessed of speech and movement. They swear by 'Our Lady'—the goddess Persephone; but the deity whose festival they visit is the Syrian god Adonis; and, when with incessant chatter they have edged their way along the crowded streets, through a dense throng of carriages and cloaked and booted officers, and have been frightened by the passing of the King's caparisoned war-horses, they find themselves at last in a sumptuous Eastern mortuary-chamber, where the dead god is lying in state amid censers of gold and miniature gardens 'arrayed in silver baskets,' under a bower of foliage on which the young loves perch like nightingales, while a celebrated foreign singer begins to intone the funeral dirge.

Praxinoë and Gorgo seem perfectly at ease—they are all uncritical admiration of the show provided; but, an ill-tempered stranger having begged them to desist from their 'interminable cooing talk,' and from boring him to death with their 'eternal broad vowels,' they retort angrily that they are 'ladies of Syracuse,' and that Dorian women, they suppose, can lawfully speak with a Doric accent. Theocritus himself may have kept his Sicilian brogue. At least he was never completely acclimatised, never lost his poetic identity in the rôle of cosmopolitan *littérateur*, but, as Housman continued to draw sustenance from the distant regions of an unforgotten past, still nourished his imagination on the

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landscape he had left behind. He was one of the first of the homeless poets—a type soon to grow increasingly common in European literature. Almost every poet of our own age has been to some extent an exile—romantic wanderer, spiritual outcast or wild bohemian vagabond ; and it is difficult now to imagine a condition of society such as existed in the Mediterranean world before the modern metropolis overwhelmed the ancient city-state, and the pressure of a polyglot crowd destroyed the poet's feeling of companionship with his fellow citizens. Theocritus occupied a midway place, balanced between old and new ; and his return to Syracuse, if he in fact returned, is a subject that should receive the attention of some reflective story-teller. During his absence how had the city changed ? Did he settle down, like Shakespeare at Stratford, to enjoy the prosaic comforts of a local adventurer who had made good ? Or, finding the landscapes he carried in his memory more beautiful than the fields and mountain-slopes that he at length revisited, merely exchange the solitude of Egypt for a deeper sense of dispossession ?

A Visit to Mrs. Wilcox

BY NAOMI LEWIS

*Though critics may bow to art, and I am its own true lover,
It is not art, but heart, which wins the wide world over.*

ACCORDING to *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*—though the date varies a little in the different source books—it is just over a hundred years since the birth of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, author of this pleasing couplet. The anniversary (November 1950) was not, I think, celebrated in this country, and the *Companion's* entry, so far from being genial, is not only terse but tart. Impaling the lady as the ‘Wisconsin poetaster,’ it adds :

‘Her first book, *Drops of Water* (1872), a collection of temperance verse, was followed by nearly 40 volumes of romantic, unctuous verse, distinguished by a sentimental approach to spiritualistic, metaphysical, and pseudo-erotic subjects. Her popular reputation was insured when *Poems of Passion* (1883) was rejected for “immorality.” Her platitudes also found expression in many short stories, sketches and novels.’

As a piece of lexicography this can scarcely be called dispassionate ; nor does it convey very much about those seventy years of the poet’s life, except that they were busy. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, at once more generous and more cautious (though even less rich in biographical detail), simply quotes from *The Times* obituary notice of October 1919, the month of Mrs. Wilcox’s death. She was, this affirms, ‘the most popular poet of either sex and of any age, read by thousands who never open Shakespeare.’ True, in 1919 there can have been few English homes still unprovided with one or more of the suède-covered volumelets, violet, rose or sage-green in colour, containing extracts or ‘Gems’ from Mrs. Wilcox’s body of poetry. True, at this very moment there can be few adults unfamiliar with the poet’s name and it may be, though unwittingly, with some of her verses. ‘Laugh and the world laughs with you. . . .’—‘It is easy enough to be pleasant, When life flows by like a song. . . .’ Do not these lines, even in

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the most cultivated mind, ring some distant, thin, metallic bell? All the same, *The Times* of 1919 has made a bold statement, and one which tempts a curious reader to journey a little further into the lady's life and works—as far, at least, as the limited biographical sources in this country allow.

So to the pursuit of Mrs. Wilcox. It was not at once rewarding. A distant public library, eventually, furnished her complete Poems, in several much-handled volumes. The British Museum provided an Autobiography and other fragmentary material; it also revealed—though no critical studies appear to have been made of her work—the existence of an edition of Mrs. Wilcox's poems prepared for school use. An intensive reading of all this Wilcoxiana left me not only exhilarated but—what shall I say?—respectful.

Photographs of the poet at all ages were quite abundant; they present a face so little unexpected as to seem straightway familiar. It is a handsome face, changing little with the years—a face at once feminine and formidable, with plenty of fair curling hair, attractive blunt features, and a determined lower jaw. The eyes are intensely purposeful. Though full-length photographs show that she was very short (she would have liked to be tall, with a 'long swan-like neck') it is clear that she was never insignificant. 'Her hair was light,' one writer noted: 'her eyes had tigerish gleams when she wore her favourite topaz. She always had to have some chiffon fluttering in her hand or round her neck.' The episode of her meeting with James Whitcomb Riley in the days of her early success as a magazine contributor adds a little to this picture. The two poets had been corresponding for several months, about poetry, and would, no doubt, have long continued to do so had not Mr. Riley arranged one day to call. 'I attired myself,' she relates, 'in a new gown—one of the first really modish gowns I had ever owned. I remember it was black, with little pipings of pale blue, simple, but quite in the fashion. My hair also was arranged in the fashion of the hour. The front was cut in a full fluffy "bang" which everybody feminine wore just then. I had at that time a radiant bloom; and I went to meet my caller, thinking my black and cerulean gown was very becoming. Not so Mr. Riley.' Mr. Riley, in fact, had exact views on how 'a genius' should dress and behave, and these views did not include the pastimes (to which Miss Wheeler admitted) of dancing and lawn tennis. And how, he asked her, did she think 'that God-woman Mrs. Browning' would have looked in a fashionable gown and with a bang?

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'Very much better,' Mrs. Wilcox tells us that she replied, 'than she did with the corkscrew curls prominent in the pictures I had seen of her.' Their friendship never recovered from the meeting. Still, she commented, 'he and I were not suited to be chums.'

This bright young woman came of an impoverished family who had moved from Vermont to Wisconsin a year before her birth—she was the last of four children—in a melancholy attempt to earn a living by farming. Such a life destroys the weak, though the tough may profit from it. It gave Ella a stimulus to exotic dreaming, but also a habit of desperate industry even more useful, maybe, than her pre-natal experience of Shakespeare, Scott, and 'various works of fiction,' to which her mother, frustrated in her own life, had applied herself, in the hope and belief that the child would turn out to be a novelist. In late years this daughter was able to write :

. . . I am one who lives to say
My life has held more gold than grey,
And that the splendour of the real
Surpassed my early dreams' ideal.

For, apart from dreams and toil, the dismal farm life had little to offer the romantic and energetic Ella. By the time she was twenty she was almost supporting the Wheeler family with her busy verse and prose contributions to Western magazines. Her success, though large and demonstrative in the native manner, was of a local kind until 1883, the year of *Poems of Passion*.

Poems of Passion! How thrilling is the sound—and yet, how innocent the story of this little volume. The fifty or so poems it contains had all appeared separately in periodicals before the author offered the collection to a publisher. 'My amazement,' she records, 'can hardly be imagined when Jansen and Mc.Clung returned the manuscript of my volume, intimating that it was immoral.' A newspaper heard of the matter and came out with the strange headlines :

TOO LOUD FOR CHICAGO
THE SCARLET CITY BY THE LAKE SHOCKED
BY A BADGER GIRL WHOSE VERSES
OUT-SWINBURNE SWINBURNE AND
OUT-WHITMAN WHITMAN

Other papers echoed the tale ; other publishers made offers for the

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book, which was an immediate and lasting success when it appeared, on both sides of the Atlantic. Churlish readers insisted that the poems were based on the author's own 'immoral experiences.' It was far from being the case.

'My knowledge of life [she writes] was bounded by visits to Madison and Milwaukee, Chicago and some lesser villages ; and by books I had read and letters I had received from more or less intellectual people. The works of Gautier, Daudet, Ouida, with a bit of Shakespeare, Swinburne and Byron . . . no doubt lent to my vivid imagination and temperamental nature the flame which produced the censured verses.'

No critic could have put it better—though the list might have included Rossetti. The American press, all the same, showed displeasure. The *Chicago Herald*, quoting a description of them as 'the songs of half-t tipsy wantons,' expressed the hope that Miss Ella Wheeler would 'now relapse into Poems of Decency.' Charles A. Dana, in a scathing review for the *New York Sun*, quoted half a column of lines containing the word *kiss*. 'This brought me,' she notes, 'scores of letters asking where the book could be purchased ; and I wrote a note of thanks to Mr. Dana.' Mr. Dana, she adds, 'was exceedingly wroth at my note.'

It is hard today to understand the disturbance caused by these simple though spirited verses. We have the same feeling as we open the *Yellow Book* whose poetry *Poems of Passion* somehow resembles—though Ella Wheeler's work was a decade earlier. One or two drawing-room pieces have, it is true, an extra dash of operatic bohemia—a particular flavour, if you like, of Bodley Head ; *The Duet*, for instance, in which a gentleman indulges, while his wife Maud is singing, in memories of Lisette, a '*grisette*,' with whom he was once (as Mrs. Wilcox would have put it) chums.

And between the verses for interlude,
I kissed your throat, and your shoulders nude.
* * * * *

They have ceased singing that old duet,
Stately Maud and the tenor McKey.
' You are burning your coat with your cigarette,
And *qu'avez-vous*, dearest, your lids are wet,'
Maud says, as she leans o'er me.
And I smile, and lie to her, husband-wise,
' Oh, it is nothing but smoke in my eyes.'

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But mostly they confine their *élan*, which is considerable, to a less precise treatment of such motifs in human relationships as constancy, inconstancy, hope, pleasure, nostalgia.

Still, however guilelessly meant, her poems have an impulsive-ness that often invited trouble. One of these was *The Birth of the Opal*, written at the request of a jeweller who thought of this stone (he said) as the child of the sunbeam and the moonbeam. A pretty notion. Yet one literary hostess ceased to invite the author to her *salon* on the grounds that in her somewhat *degagé* lines she had 'laid bare all the secrets of married life.'—'My God, madam,' exclaimed a Spaniard to whom Mrs. Wilcox confided this: 'did the lady think that she alone knew those secrets ?'

The poem, nevertheless, remained a favourite piece for recital in those fabulous New York drawing-rooms of the 'eighties and 'nineties. We are told that young Aubrey Boucicault, 'a beautiful lad, a sort of child prodigy in the artistic circles of New York,' made them a speciality.

Mrs. Wilcox's marriage, it is pleasant to note, was long and happy. Robert Wilcox, her husband, a large and kindly man, seems to have possessed the peculiar reserves of calm, stability and devotion that his position exacted ; he shared with her, moreover, the interest in psychic phenomena which became more and more part of her life. But poetry and spiritualism alone could not absorb her enthusiastic energy. At her summer home on the Connecticut coast we read of her organising good works, running 'costume balls, soirées and musicales.' She loved swimming (which her poor mother had forbidden as 'immodest') ; she loved dancing even more. She invented a dance, the Ella Wheeler Wilcox Glide—'though' (to quote a friend) 'there was only one person in all the United States who would perform all those rococo turns and twists on a ballroom floor ; and that was Ella Wheeler Wilcox.' Her enormous vitality never flagged. She travelled. She was over sixty when she went with her husband to North Africa where 'each evening' (she recalls), 'he liked to have me take my mandoline out under the big *térébinthe* tree and play the Arabian airs while he smoked his cigar.' She enjoyed reading—and rhyming—about scientific progress. Even more usefully, she wrote in the Hearst press answers to everyday problems that are remarkable for their common sense, boldness, and absence of sanctimoniousness.

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Her goodwill embraced not only 'democracy,' but transatlantic accord. We may pause at this portrait, the Englishman's portrait :

For under the front that seems so cold,
And the voice that is wont to storm,
We are certain to find a big broad mind
And a heart that is soft and warm.
And he carries his woes in a lordly way
As only the great souls can :
And it makes us glad when in truth we say,
'We are kin of the Englishman.'

When Queen Victoria died she was sent over by the New York *American* to write a poem about the funeral. A sentence : 'The Queen is taking a drive today' in an old magazine in the hotel reading-room gave her inspiration. 'I had never been especially interested in the Queen,' she records, 'but as I wrote I began to feel very deeply her worth, and the pathos of her last ride ; and I wept copiously,'—a sentence that should be studied by all occasional-verse writers. The poem, *The Queen's Last Drive*, was cabled to America, cabled back to an English paper the same day, set to music by a friend of the new King, and a year later sung at the Royal Family's memorial service. Without being sombre or overawed—its author never was either—it is a set piece of which no Laureate need have been ashamed ; though I find in the Journals of 'Michael Field' that it drew a peevish comment from the two esoteric ladies who wrote under this name. We see her for a moment in Paris, invited (commanded is perhaps a better word) to take breakfast with Sarah Bernhardt ; and in London again, in 1913, being presented at Court. A little difficulty arose here because—in spite of the nervous protests of her publishers and of American Embassy officials—she declared that she would wear a headdress not of feathers but of lilies. 'I shall speak to the Lord Chamberlain,' she told them. She did. She wore feathers. But her verve, we may be sure, was unabated.

Verve and versatility—they are the outstanding features of her writing, as of her life. They prevented her, undoubtedly, from being a better poet than she was. For what is likely to disconcert a sophisticated reader is not merely the range of her poetic output, but how nearly good it contrives at moments to be. (She herself, it is only fair to say, would not have admitted the variation in quality that such a tribute assumes.) A poem like *The South*

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suggests, for all its glib adjectives, something a little more than virtuosity.

A queen of indolence and idle grace,
Robed in the vestments of a costly gown,
She turns the languor of her lovely face
Upon progression with a lazy frown.
Her throne is built upon a marshy down ;
Malarial mosses wreath her like old lace ;
With slim crossed feet, unshod and bare and brown,
She sits indifferent to the world's swift race.

Across the seas there stalks an ogre grim ;
Too languid she even for fear's alarms,
While frightened nations rally in defence,
She lifts her smiling Creole eyes to him,
And reaching out her shapely unwashed arms
She clasps her rightful lover—Pestilence.

In her early poems it is interesting to see her sampling the manners of her illustrious near-contemporaries : it may be Tennyson :

I said to my heart, 'Let us take our fill
Of mirth, and music, and love, and laughter ;
For it all must end with this waltz-quadrille. . . .'

or Swinburne :

She walks in her beauty immortal.
Each household grows sad as she nears,
But she crosses at length every portal,
The mystical Lady of Tears.

or Rossetti :

Her cheek was wan, her wistful mouth
Was lifted like a cup,
The moonful night dripped liquid light :
She seemed to quaff it up.
(Oh ! that unburied corpse that lies in space.)

Here are dramatic monologues on the Browning model ; here a verse narrative (*Maurine*) not in the least unrelated to *Aurora Leigh*. Yet rightly, I think, we prefer to those just quoted, such lines as :

We people who chum with the waves and the wind
Know more than all wise weather bureaus combined.

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For she was in her own way an original. The Wilcox manner is unmistakable.

Why sit down in gloom and darkness
With your grief to sup?
As you drink Fate's bitter tonic
Smile across the cup.

One can almost hear the voice behind it. It is the authentic voice of that nineteenth-century phenomenon, the domestic bard.

The domestic bard—the poet of the universal middle sentiment appearing in homes and hearts but not the serious anthologies—is, indeed, one of the many by-products of the Industrial Age. The particular virtues extolled, the consolations offered, are acceptable only to a middle class community, of few and small ambitions and many and small anxieties. Such an audience appeared for the first time in the newly-domesticated nineteenth century. The popular poets it created are not identical in manner or even in philosophy, but they share certain features. In language made palatable by familiar groups of words (not enough tribute has been paid to the consoling powers of the cliché) they offer a compound of hope and acceptance. They are immensely fluent. They believe absolutely in what they write—and they assure their readers that their reach is equal to their grasp. In their own work, about which they have no doubts at all, they have found that the principle holds true.

Without understanding the needs of this audience and the power of the simple sentiment, the popularity of Martin Tupper, the foremost nineteenth-century exponent in this country, must always seem a mystery. He was a pioneer, it is true; he could wring innumerable themes from the favourite matter of family life; but he was *dull*, which Mrs. Wilcox never was. Nothing of Tupper survives; the line or two of his in *The Stuffed Owl* are there for courtesy's sake rather than for their merit as good bad verse. More interesting is the comparison between Mrs. Wilcox and her present-day successors in this country. I have been studying some of the works of a best-selling English versifier of our own time, whose rhymes—printed on the page to resemble prose—are read, it would seem, in many, many homes. Homely—or should it be homey?—is a word which well describes them. They recommend a little hope, much submission ('making the best of it'), no resentment, no rebellion. Be thankful, says this poet in her way, for the *little* things: gardens,

daffodils, the kettle on the hearth, 'doggies,' gnomes and pixies, 'mem'ries' or gentle wish-fantasies ('just a little house that's built of little passing dreams'). It is a consoling but not an inspiring message; beside Mrs. Wilcox's robust exhortations to stand up to life, it looks distinctly pale. If Ella Wheeler was banal, she was at least banal on the grand scale. Woman to her was not a kitchen vestal but 'a saint, a siren and a paradox.' Gnomes and daffodils were all very well—she was not small about such things—but people were better; new ones when those she knew let her down. 'Give me strong *new* friends when the old prove weak,' she wrote. She lived in the moment; it was one of her many likeable qualities.

But I—I look out on my fair Today;
I clasp it close and kiss its radiant brow.
Here with the perfect Present let me stay,
For I am happy now.

The Quiet Corner out of the world can never have been to her taste. 'Be not content; contentment means inaction,' she declared. And in another poem: 'All virtue is worth just the price it cost; Black sin is oft white truth that missed its way.'

It's easy enough to be prudent
When nothing tempts you to stray,
When without or within no voice of sin
Is luring your soul away;
But it's only a negative virtue
Until it is tried by fire. . . .

No virtue of which she approved could remain negative. It was part of her skill to invest any form of abstinence, if the context required, with a positive and even exhilarating quality. We see this in her first published work, those temperance verses which are so remarkably like drinking songs; and in one of her latest pieces, a verse exhortation to the soldiers in the 1914 War to 'Come Back Clean.' Both, we are told, had something of the same hypnotic success.

In practice the most virtuous of women—her own marriage and the admiration of her public provided all the romance she needed—she made it clear in her writings that nothing came before the claims of 'that warm red rebel, the Heart.' She had no use for half-measures, in love or in anything else. About polygamy she remarked (she had been visiting Utah): 'I would rather be a

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deceived wife, or the unfortunate affinity, even, on whom the world looks askance, than accept the position of one of a syndicate owning stock in a husband.' The married coquette—frequently the subject of her verses—drew her particular criticism. I quote from one dramatic monologue in which a gentleman explains to the wife of his friend the reason for his abrupt departure :

Then why, you ask, am I going !
A friend of mine abroad,
Whose theories I have been acting upon
Has proven himself a fraud.
You have heard me quote from Plato
A thousand times, no doubt ;
Well, I have discovered he did not know
What he was talking about.

She was not silent in the face of criticism : pity and scorn joined in her vigorous replies to letters or reviews. 'It cannot harm me,' was a typical reply to an attack, 'because my gifts are too well known, my work too well appreciated, and my own reverence and love for my growing poetical powers too great to be affected by such a stab, but it does great harm to you as a critic.' Even in the *Poems of Passion* days she had been self-possessed enough to reply to a lady objector : 'It would have been wrong for *you* to write "Poems of Passion" because you would have felt that you did wrong. My impulse was entirely free from wrong. . . . Nor would I omit *one* from the collection now. . . .'

But verse was always her best weapon. Let us look, for instance, at her defence of rhyme.

And quite out of date, too, is rhythmical metre ;
The critics declare it an insult to art.
But oh ! the sweet swing of it, oh ! the clear ring of it,
Oh, the great pulse of it, right from the heart,
Art or no art.

I find these lines quite irresistible. They contain, moreover, the essential Ella Wheeler Wilcox—her absolute assurance, her gaiety, gusto and generosity, her relative placing of heart and art. She had enough talent, one suspects, to be able to choose her road—and a choice always involves a rejection. If we find her at her best when she is at her worst, this is the inevitable fate of a capable writer unhaunted by the sad anxieties of Taste, or the pains of self-criticism, who deliberately elects to be a domestic bard.

Poems

BY GARCIA LORCA

(*Translated by Charles Johnston*)

THE BALLAD OF THE THREE RIVERS

THE river Guadalquivir
goes between oranges and olives.
The two rivers of Granada
come down from the snow to the cornfields.

Ay, for love
gone away past all returning !

The river Guadalquivir
has a beard that glitters with garnets.
The two rivers of Granada,
one has tears and one has bloodshed.

Ay, for love
gone with the breeze's passing !

To vessels under canvas
Sevilla gives a roadway ;
on the waters of Granada
sighs are the only rowers.

Ay, for love
gone away past all returning !

Guadalquivir, high tower
and wind in the orange-branches.
Dauro and Genil, small turrets
dead over pool and basin.

Ay, for love
gone with the breeze's passing !

POEMS

Who can tell if the water carries
a will o' the wisp of groaning ?

Ay, for love
gone away past all returning !

Carry orange-water and olives,
Andalucía, to your ocean.

Ay, for love
gone away with the breeze's passing !

THE DEATH OF ANTONITO EL CAMBORIO

LOUD were the voices of murder
by the Guadalquivir.
Ancient voices encircling
a deep carnation of a voice.
Over their boots he gored them
with thrusts of a wild-boar's weight.
Soapier than the dolphin
the slips that he gave them in fight.
Enemy blood had weltered
his tie to a dark carmine,
but the others were four daggers
and he had no chance but to die.
So, when the stars were plunging
their spears in the water's grey,
and the bullocks were dreaming
Veronicas of gilliflower,
loud were the voices of murder
by the Guadalquivir.

' Antonio Torres Heredia,
Camborio hard as wire,
swarthy as green moonlight,
deep carnation of a voice :
who is it that has brought you
death by the Guadalquivir ?'

' My four cousins Heredia,
children of Benamejí.
What caused them no envy in others
they envied when it was mine.
A pair of marble lockets,
shoes the colour of wine,
and this complexion softened
with oil and with *jasmín*.'

' Ay, Antonito el Camborio,
fit for an Empress' side !
Better remember the Virgin,
for you're in a fair way to die.'

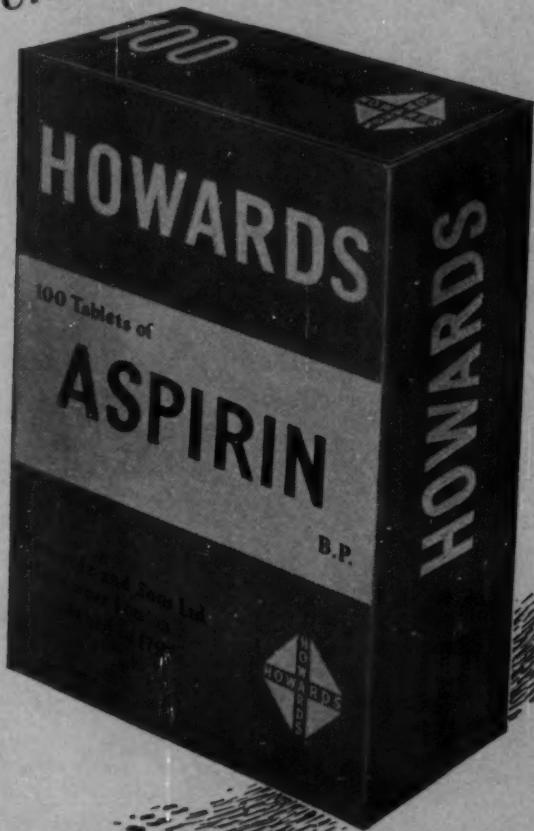
POEMS

'Ay, Federico Garcia,
call out the Civil Guard !
My waist is snapped and broken
like a stalk of Indian corn.'

Three bursts he had of bleeding
then, in profile, he died.
Living coinage whose equal
never mint in the world shall strike.
An angel came with a swagger,
put a cushion under his head,
while others of a more languid
complexion lit him a lamp.
And after the four cousins
went home to Benamejí,
voices of murder were silent
by the Guadalquivir.



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